

# The New York Review of Science Fiction

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## *Terraplane* by Jack Womack

New York: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1988; \$15.95 hc; 240 pp.  
Reviewed by Bruce Sterling

*Terraplane* is billed simply as "a novel," a non-genre effort. But it has every gleaming centimeter of science fiction's "edge." It possesses High Weirdness. It's pretzel-plotted. It features high-tech gizmos, bizarre super-science, Fortean events, sinister multinational cabals, even a startling and brilliantly-handled jaunt of time-travel.

*Terraplane*, however, is written to a very high level of allusive complexity. It is dense. It is hip. It is morbid in the extreme, glistening with the most chemically bilious kind of Pychocian/Burroughsian pessimism.

But these *weirdish* elements are not enough for a writer of Womack's ambition. Just to turn up the amps a bit, *Terraplane* is also related in a pitiless Twenty-First Centure.

As made up sci-fi lingos go—*Riddley Walker* and *A Clockwork Orange* come to mind—it functions. It lurches, it moves. It defines the twisted spirit of Womack's world as well as "Newsppeak" defined Orwell's dystopia. A few quotes might give the flavor:

Unstabling his hands, he lapped them stomachways. His face lacked all but laughter; his smile's rictus certified caution. Whether someone truly fixed us or whether he only felt nerves was unbeknownst. Transactions within Russia problematick; feasting with those who might moneify you or kill you with equal ease poured no syrup over the already indigestible.

Or this Womackian tour-de-force:

Mayhap I was wrong; it possible that as time's lobotomy settled over years, that which seemed most unexpectedly familiar became the recipient of all long-bound pain.

Huh? But the diction grows on you; it has a compelling coherence. What's more, on those occasions when Womack grows excited and loses his cool, he launches into a clear Swiftian English:

Moscow was no more dangerous than any American city. Between the restaurant and Marx Prospect we traveled six blocks, passing seven robberies, three assaults and something of a gray nature, half spot and half rape . . . As in America, one of Russia's myriad charms was that you could be murdered without reason and not even God would notice, or care.\*

*Terraplane* possesses a rigorous and genuine obscurity which is unmodded by self-indulgence. It has what Rudy Rucker would describe as "irreducible information-density."

The virtue of *Terraplane* is that it is knit tight. Readers can work out of its baroqueness in serene confidence, secure that Jack

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Paul Park, and Joan D. Vinge

## Brooks Landon Fractal Prose from a Moralist in Mirrorshades: Bruce Sterling's *Islands in the Net*

New York: Morrow, 1988; \$18.85 hc; 348 pp.

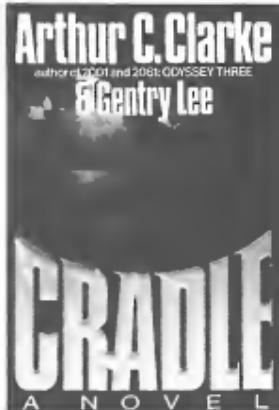
Charles Cullen is not a principal character in Bruce Sterling's impressive and ambitious fourth novel, *Islands in the Net*, but he is a good measure of Sterling's intriguing achievement. Introduced in a brief paragraph on page 60, Cullen is the black, middle-aged CEO of Rizome, the multinational corporation whose international concerns and strategies provide much of the framework for Sterling's plot. When we next see Cullen, some two years and 248 pages later, he has been ritually demoted, not so much for the failure of his policies as for their unforeseen consequences, and rusticated to a Rizome old folks home where he does simple manual tasks. Within this unremarkable outline of seemingly peripheral events, however, Sterling has packed nothing but surprises.

Consider that Rizome, the multinational corporation, turns out to be an economic democracy, more like a family than a company, committed to improving the quality of life just as surely as to economic success (imagine IBM or Exxon as the moral center of a novel). Cullen's demotion results not from policies that lose money or weaken Rizome in any bottom-line way, but from policies that inadvertently lead to personal suffering by Laura Webster, a Rizome associate and Sterling's protagonist. Finally, not only does Cullen accept his demotion gracefully and philosophically, but it is also clear that he profits from it and will eventually be able to re-integrate himself into Rizome's decision-making processes. Moreover, when at the novel's end Cullen mentions to Laura his dream of "some kind of genuine, basic improvement in the human condition," he clearly seems to speak for Sterling as well, and the way in which we learn so much

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THE WORLD ACCORDING TO

# ARTHUR C. CLARKE, JOAN D. VINGE AND GREG BEAR



From the gifted mind of Arthur C. Clarke, a spellbinding novel of extraterrestrial adventure that does for the sea what his epic science fiction classic 2001: A Space Odyssey did for outer space.

AN AUGUST HARDCOVER



Science fiction Grand Mistress Joan D. Vinge returns with an unforgettable, futuristic adventure of drug smuggling, corruption and intrigue—her first major work since her Hugo Award-winning novel, *The Snow Queen*.

A SEPTEMBER HARDCOVER



The long-awaited sequel to multiple Hugo and Nebula Award-winning author Greg Bear's critically acclaimed bestseller, *Eon*, this is a captivating and breathtakingly imaginative journey to an alternate world.

AN OCTOBER HARDCOVER

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Womack will not shortchange them through haste or laziness. This is quality work, free of solecisms and blind spots. Womack has a well-informed, multifaceted, nimble mind; his auctorial voice rings with confidence.

But even that cadre of readers who are willing to meet Womack's exacting demands may find his sensibility a hurdle.

The bleak milieu of *Terraplane* is increasingly familiar territory for genre readers. The twenty-first century is dominated by malignant multinational bureaucracies. Warfare is constant, but mostly confined to Third World backwaters where mass death is unimportant.

Our narrator is Luther Biggerstaff, a retired American general now pulling down big bucks in the civilian side of the military-industrial complex. His companion and side is a frightening professional assassin known simply as "Jake."

As *Terraplane* opens, Luther and Jake are pulling an industrial espionage scam in a crazed and rundown twenty-first century Moscow. This setting is brilliant in its satirical mordancy. The apparent plot, however, quickly collapses into a haywire, chaotic struggle for basic survival.

The failed scheme, with the desperate escape, are common devices in genre novels. Womack breaks his scheme down with unusual hate, though, because he's impatient for the desperation. It bores Womack to see people cope, even if they do it cleverly. In *Terraplane*, prosperity or security of any kind are essentially unthinkable. There are divorces but no weddings; sex but no children; laws but no justice; politics but no hope for change.

In Womack's sensibility, the outbreak of violence is a cause, not for any real alarm, but for RELAXATION, even a feeble sort of joie-de-vivre. It is a welcome release from the endless soul-corroding strain of Pynchonian paranoia.

At last one can stop muttering and looking over one's shoulder, and get down to the liberative basics of kill-and-be-killed. Starting numbers of people die in *Terraplane*. Most are killed by Jake, who is aptly described as "glaciatorlike," "something

immeasurably cold which crushed all before it." (Toward the end of the book, when even Jake's lethal pyrotechnics begin to pall, a horrific plague breaks out.)

None of this violence changes the status quo in any way. This is Bernie Goetz violence: reflexive, urban, nightmarish, and completely inconclusive.

Jake, at least, openly thrives by inflicting death; General Biggerstaff displays a few qualms, but they are not very convincing. There is a recurrent motif in this book concerning the killing of children, which is presented as some ultimate violation of honor and decency. But in *Terraplane*'s pervasive atmosphere of Kaliakistic oppression and spectacular death, to single out this particular moral trespass seems like Jesuitical hairsplitting, and carries no real impact. It's as if a crack dealer were to express shocked indignation at the notion of anyone selling heroin.

Womack tries to eat his cake and vomit it, too. He invents a horrific situation, and invites his reader to join him in scandalized condemnation of it. It's hard to work up any real sense of outrage over this, especially when so much of it is clearly meant to be blackly funny. When Womack hauls out his trump cards and tries to make us weep, it only makes us squirm.

There's a general generic difficulty in mounting the pulpit to denounce the iniquities of an imaginary world. It's hard to make this carry any serious moral authority. Made-up worlds are not as important as the real one. One cannot join Amnesty International to defend the human rights of oppressed hobbits.

This is why most futuristic fiction is dryly speculative, or wackily satirical, or politically didactic. It rarely tries to tap the deep wells of emotion of, say, *The Sorrow and the Pity*. Concentration camps happened; concentration camps for Martians are not compelling emotional realities, but merely unpleasant conceits.

Womack seems unaware of this basic problem, perhaps because he is not a genre writer by conviction. He is instead a contemporary writer ("postmodernist" sounds good) who is

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attracted to science fiction, not because of Big Ideas or Sense of Wonder, but because science fiction has the native surrealism of the contemporary world.

It's a sign of the oddness of the present cultural environment that a writer of Womack's perception and ability would attempt to write a book which is both "twisted" and "heavy." *Terraplane* is very successfully twisted, but the heaviness still looks tacked-on. Womack has a sensibility which has not yet found its deepest levels of integration. It's still a muddle; he has a lot sussed out, but he can't talk convincingly about all the things he would like to. What is lacking is authenticity, the sense of expression from the heart.

Perhaps this explains the otherwise-puzzling emphasis in *Terraplane* on the music of Robert Johnson, the old Delta Blues singer. Johnson's "Terraplane Blues" gives the novel its title. Delta blues is a very unlikely theme music for such a relentlessly postindustrial and urbanized vision. Womack uses Johnson's music as

a shorthand for a kind of soulfulness which is hopelessly lost to his future world. Actually, the real problem is Womack's, and that of any artist who shares his vision: how to talk from the heart during a cultural period so relentlessly aware of the pervasive nature of artifice.

So it's not quite all there yet. And it looks peculiar. But at least he's trying.

And Womack and Johnson have more in common than one might think. *Terraplane*, like "Terraplane Blues," is lonely, and morbid, and sad, and haunted by unexpressed sin, covered up by a half-defiant tough-guy swagger. But there's a definite magic in it. *Terraplane* is a monochrome vision, all chrome and matte black. Still, it can speak to Womack's natural audience, in a way that compels instant recognition and cult allegiance. It may be a small audience, but that means little; it's probably larger than Robert Johnson's was.

And it's only Womack's second book. This is the great advantage of Womack over Johnson. Womack is still learning. He's still alive. ▶

## Fractal Prose: *Islands in the Net*

*continued from page 1*

surprising information about this minor character's life provides a perfect index to the amazingly textured style of Sterling's novel, a style I can only describe as fractal prose.

Just as computer animators have applied Benoit Mandelbrot's work with fractal geometry to produce incredibly detailed images of natural objects, Sterling has developed the conceptual equivalent of fractal structures in his fiction. Mandelbrot coined the term "fractal" to describe irregular fragmented shapes of larger shapes which can be magnified endlessly without losing their complicated structure. Using affine transformations, mathematicians can break down a natural shape such as a fern leaf into its smaller fractal copies and then those copies can be piled up and collaged, with a few random variations thrown in, to produce a detailed image of an entire fern leaf or a forest full of ferns. In this way, fractals allow computer animators to construct hyper-realistic pictures from self-similar smaller "scaling" images—a rugged mountain can be built from tiny mountain-like fractal rocks, a tree can be built from fractal twigs and leaves, a cloud from tiny globular clouds.

You can bet Sterling understands fractals better than I do, and you can bet one of his goals in *Islands* was to construct a work of fractal clarity and complexity—he even uses the word *fractal* as a modifier in his prose. The closer you look at a fractally generated image, the more detailed it becomes; the more angles you examine it from, the more new information you discover. The same is true of any aspect of *Islands*: the closer you look at any of its characters, ideas, or situations, the more detailed that subject becomes. For example, not just Laura, but each woman in *Islands* addresses, in her words or in her life, different issues of feminism, arguably the most important of the many ideologies that Sterling explores.

From the profusion of rigorously self-similar detail, Sterling has crafted a radically realistic semblance, a novel packed with information, *all of it important*, all of it systematically linked. And here comes one of Sterling's biggest surprises: in a novel whose world inexorably adheres to the paradigms of systems theory, one of the first being that in a system what counts are consequences rather than intentions, Sterling focuses precisely on the moral intentions of his characters. The fractal pattern from which he constructs the narrative world of *Islands* itself advances a radical proposition in contemporary fiction: individuals must accept full moral responsibility for their actions, for individual actions have a fractal relation to world affairs. John Gardner, Mr. Moral Fiction himself, couldn't have asked for more.

Rather than extrapolating *beyond* the givens of post-industrial society, Sterling extrapolates *within* them, breaking down global issues to the personal choices which structure them—to use his phrase, "carrying extrapolation into the fabric of daily life." For Sterling, like H. G. Wells before him, extrapolation calls for confronting rather than escaping the consequences and implications of our fascination with technology. He presents his future with the analytical rigor of a fine journalist, considering

deeply embedded cultural and ideological differences in a way reminiscent of the superb investigations of Asian life by the *Atlantic's* James Fallows. In Sterling's hands culture is never monolithic, and his presentation of the social and political matrices of Grenada, Singapore, and Mali are ingeniously complex, from disillusioned consumer socialists in Grenada to the Bob Black-inspired Anti-Labour Party in Singapore. Sterling won't let us forget the Third World or think of it merely as an exotic setting for his dramatic action; Third World problems and complexities drive his plot, forcing us to realize that "its" problems are inescapably also ours.

Avoiding the sentimental extremes of post-apocalyptic dystopianism and post-millennial utopianism, *Islands in the Net* advances a pragmatopian view of a twenty-first century whose dominant technological and ideological impulse is toward integration, assimilation, and cooperation. Sexism and racism are on the wane. International relations, if not human nature, seem to have taken a modest Prigoginistic leap to a less cynical level; atomic weapons have been abolished and bipolar conflict defused; the age of the superpowers has passed, and world order is maintained by a low-profile global organization referred to simply as Vienna. The main concern of this hazy world police agency is controlling the flow of information to keep terrorists from threatening the new stability. But this is also a future haunted by twentieth-century problems such as Third World starvation, an AIDS-like retrovirus (*Islands* contains the first safe-sex scene I've run across in recent fiction), ideological self-righteousness masking a desire for power, and a macho nostalgia for military solutions to ideological and cultural problems.

Politically decentralized, this future is held together by a rootlike corporate infrastructure and by the technological web of the global communications network:

Computers did it. Computers melted other machines, fusing them together. Television-telephone-telx. Tape recorder-VCR-laser disk. Broadcast tower linked to microwave dish linked to satellite. Phone line, cable TV, fiber-optic cords hissing out words and pictures in torrents of pure light. All nested together in a web over the world, a global nervous system, an octopus of data. There'd been plenty of hype about it. It was easy to make it sound transcendently incredible.

Incredible, but neither infallible nor invulnerable. Parasitizing the net are data pirates who steal and sell or develop information about new technologies. From data havens in corrupt nation states such as Grenada and Singapore, these data pirates—euphemistically called bankers—constitute an irresponsible and unpredictable joker in the deck of global development. As Sterling's novel opens, representatives from dangerously competing data havens in Grenada, Singapore, and Luxembourg gather for secret

negotiations organized by Rizome and held at its Galveston Lodge, which is managed by David and Laura Webster. After one of the representatives from Grenada is assassinated by an unidentified remotely controlled flying drone, Rizome's Central Committee agrees that steps must be taken to assure Grenada that the assassination was not the work of Rizome or of one of the competing data havens.

In keeping with Rizome's integrationist objectives, but prompted more by their willingness to accept personal responsibility for a guest's murder at their Lodge, Laura and David Webster volunteer to go to Grenada, along with their infant daughter, acting at once as good will ambassadors ("cognitive spearheads") and potential hostages, protected only by their constant link to the Net. The Grenadians proudly introduce David and Laura to their quasi-revolutionary, entrepreneurial culture, one defiantly free from what they perceive as the Net's levelling and mediating influence, a kind of technological imperialism. And the maverick Grenadian culture does have a kind of sixties appeal, Sterling's acknowledgement that the benefits of the Net cannot be enjoyed without certain tradeoffs. But a devastating terrorist attack on Grenada puts an end to the productive ideological give-and-take between the Websters' Rizome-supported global vision and the Grenadian insistence on independence. Grenada suspects Singapore of launching the attack and vows retaliation: a murder has escalated to a battle and threatens to become a war. Committed to preventing such a war, Laura insists on going to Singapore, this time against her husband's bitter arguments that the matter is out of their hands—too large, too dangerous, a job for governments rather than for corporations. "That's premillennium talk," objects Laura. "The world's different now."

Laura's brave determination to accept responsibility for trying to make the world a better place leads her into a series of ever more dangerous situations, culminating in her kidnapping and brutal imprisonment in the rogue African nation of Mali. The logical extension of a clear line of strong and ethically courageous women in Sterling's fiction (*Dalus in Insolvent Ocean*, *Saint Anne Twiceborn* in *The Artificial Kid*, *Nora Mavrides in Schismatrix*), Laura is a postmodern Joan of Arc, whispered to not by God but by the Net. Her kind of heroism, the self-effacing commitment of a Gandhi or a Martin Luther King, has not been much seen in contemporary fiction. The antithesis of the Heinleinian "little tailor," Laura is simply a woman who completely seizes control of her own life, rigorously follows her ideals, and fights the good fight with her own Net-honed informational skills. For this she pays a terrible price; in Sterling's world as in Nietzsche's, moral bravery makes an essential difference, but it doesn't necessarily lead to personal happiness.

I'm trying to suggest that *Islands in the Net* is a most unusual novel in any number of different ways. Structured exclusively through dialectical conflicts, the novel never presents issues or characters we can comfortably embrace or dismiss, label good or bad. For instance, Laura's profound but low-key feminist actions lead her to disappointment just as surely as they do to moral fulfilment, while her best friend Emily's noble intentions unwittingly cause Laura more grief than do her Malian jailors. The cultural tribalism of the separatist desert-warrior Gresham, the man who rescues Laura from Mali and helps her tap into the Net to expose Vienna's corruption, defiantly opposes the enlightened economic tribalism of Rizome, but Gresham remains a threat to world order we must secretly admire, while Rizome offers a safely controlled corporatized future about as exciting as high fiber breakfast cereal.

Sterling refers to his technique as "replacing oppositions with ambiguities," and every page of *Islands* bears witness to his subtle (and sometimes perverse) mastery of dialectical ironies. For instance, while rejecting the technological control of the Net, the Grenadians casually produce a low-tech, dramatically darkening suntan lotion that proves much more important to world integration than does the Net's high-tech paragon videoglasses. Nor can there be said to be any real villains in Sterling's novel,

### Read This

Recently read and recommended by Nancy Kress:

*Islands in the Net*, Bruce Sterling, Arbor House. Sterling doing what Sterling does best: creating completely believable technological and social fictions. Read this one for the plausible and scary uses of data pirating, for the global scope, and for the interesting slant on corporations as the (mostly) good guys instead of heavies.

*Deserted Cities of the Heart*, Lewis Shiner, Doubleday Foundation. Novel set in contemporary Mexico in which aging survivors of the '60s still believe the world can be changed for the better. Shiner is never sentimental as he works out the growth in awareness of his three central characters. The prose is spare, clear, and gorgeous—far above most current writing in any genre.

*Unicorn Mountain*, Michael Bishop, Arbor House. Interesting and moving fantasy novel involving unmythical, sick unicorns, Indians confronting feminism; and a dying AIDS patient. Bishop makes the unlikely mixture work with likeable, quirky characters. A book not getting the attention it deserves.

*The Rewiring of America: The Fiber Optics Revolution*, C. David Chaffee, Academic Press. Nonfiction examination of the changes fiber-optic technology is making in the way everything around you works. Absorbing, not too technical.

since even his angry rejectionists such as the Grenadian terrorist Sticky, the T. E. Lawrence-like desert guerrilla Gresham, or even the Oliver North-like Malian mercenary Hesselteine, all accept moral responsibility just as fully as Laura does, sharing many of her goals even if they pursue them in dangerously destabilizing ways. In fact, it is precisely the incremental fractal differentiations among minor characters like Sticky, Gresham, and Hesselteine that make Sterling's fiction so engaging, and one of his many fine ironies is that each of these men "rescues" Laura from immediate physical danger, while ultimately representing the major threat to her dreams for global stability. As Gresham admits to her, "I love war...Somewhere inside me, I wanted Armageddon, and this is as close as it ever got."

Sterling has a kind of genius for quickly sketching memorable minor characters, another manifestation of his belief in the value of individuals—a sign more of his populist ideology than of his concerns as a novelist. The point is that minor characters such as Carlotta, a Holy Prostitute in the Church of Ishita—in effect a kind of feminist hooker—always do much more than just help along Sterling's plot: they represent fractals of larger ideological forces, they challenge David's and Laura's complacent faith in the Net, and they remind us just how surprising it is that Sterling's protagonists are classically bourgeois—enlightened twenty-first century Yuppies.

Each of Sterling's many memorable minor characters reveals complicated ideological positions through the carefully crafted rhetoric of brief dialogues rather than through the expository declamations so common to ideologically-concerned novels. Certainly evident in his earlier novels, Sterling's ear for confrontational rhetoric provides even the most banal-seeming exchanges in *Islands* with ideological subtexts. Or, to put it another way, all of his characters are worth listening to.

One in particular stays with me—an unnamed young Chinese Singaporean who hacks his way onto the local Net to broadcast a poignant manifesto opposing the martial law which has just been imposed on his city:

But then comes this curfew business. I am not liking

this very much, but I am good citizen so I am deciding, okay. Go right ahead Jayaratnam. Catch the terror rascals, give them what for, definitely. Then the cops are coming into my building. . . . I admire a cop. Cop is a fine, necessary fellow. Cop on the beat, I always say to him, 'Good morning, fellow, good job, keep the peace.' Even ten cops are okay. A hundred cops though, and I am changing mind rapidly. Suddenly my neighborhood very plentiful in cop. Thousands. Having real people outnumbered. Barging into my flat. Search every room, every gracious thing. Take my fingerprints, take my blood sample even.

## Frank Dietz Utopian Allohistory: Stefan Heym's *Schwarzenberg*

Some call it alternative history, some parallel-time-track stories, and Gordon Chamberlain and other scholars have called it allohistory.<sup>1</sup> The meaning is basically the same—narratives concerned with the old problem “what would have happened if?” Caesar survives the Idea of March, the Moors conquer France, the Reformation fails, and Napoleon wins at Waterloo. These are only a few of the alternative timelines explored by allohistorical fiction. Allohistory offers a peculiar fascination, primarily because it offers such a clear example of what Darío Suárez calls “cognitive estrangement.” Allohistory introduces a defamiliarizing perspective from which our familiar past and present suddenly appear strange, implausible, and even merely accidental. These narratives question historical determinism and present world history as a series of accidents—maybe even mistakes. Granted, some of these stories use the alternative continuum merely as a backdrop for some familiar adventure plot, but the best allohistorical fictions, such as Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, can achieve a truly disturbing effect. They destroy our unquestioning confidence in the validity of history by opening up a panorama of histories, none of which could be called more real than any other. We are like the dreamer in Borges's “The Circular Ruins,” who suspects that he is only the figment of someone else's dream.

At the same time allohistory is emerging as a major mode of the utopian imagination. Recent literary utopias such as Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and Carl Amer's *An den Fwern der Leysermark* (see my review in NYRSF #1) all employ the concept of alternative time tracks. Allohistory tends itself particularly to the ambivalent utopianism observable in the 1970s and 1980s. While traditional utopias questioned the superiority of Western civilization, they only replaced it with another stable center of reference. Ambiguous utopias, at least since H. G. Wells's *A Modern Utopia* (1905), regard any utopian system as necessarily provisional. Allohistory contributes to this relativistic stance by envisioning a multitude—or infinity—of possible worlds, none of which could ever be regarded as an absolute ideal.

Judging from my reading experience and from Chamberlain's annotated bibliography, however, one might conclude that the majority of allohistories tend more to the dystopian side, particularly the many stories in which Germany won World War II. After reading the anthology *Hitler Victorious*, David Dovorkin's *Bwipdy* and Katharine Burdekin's *Savanna Nights*, however, I found their emotional impact rather tame. Perhaps this lies in the nature of the subject; can the science fiction author, after all, outstrip the real horrors of the Third Reich?

While there has been quite a bit of morbid fascination with a victorious Hitler, few writers have envisioned positive German allohistories. Stefan Heym, though, has taken up this challenge by attempting to create a utopian alternative to German history in the year 1945. In his novel *Schwarzenberg* (1984) he describes what might have happened if a small region in Thuringia had been allowed to become an independent republic offering a third

... Can't call girlfriend. Can't call mother even. Can't even complain to local politico as Parliament is now all spoilt. What is use of all that voting and stupid campaigns, if it come to this, finish? Is anybody else feeling this way, I am wondering. I am not political, but I am not trusting Government one millimeter. I am small person, but I am not nothing at all.

Nor is anyone—as Sterling effectively reminds us over and over in *Islands in the Net*, a novel at once so simple, so complex, so subtle but so stunningly different that it deserves and rewards our serious attention. ▶

alternative between the two power blocs.

Heym's experience of the subject is anything but theoretical. An exile from Nazi Germany, he eventually served in a U.S. Army propaganda radio unit that broadcast into Germany, first from France, then from Luxembourg. He kept his radio scripts and later published them as *Reden an den Feind* (Speeches to the Enemy). After the war he first settled in West Germany, but emigrated to East Germany during the 1950s. Today Heym is one of the best-known East German novelists.

Interestingly enough, the action of *Schwarzenberg* is not altogether fictional. There was a county named Schwarzenberg (which has since then been merged with another county) which remained unoccupied during a short time in the summer of 1945. The idea of an independent republic and the constitution of Schwarzenberg, as Heym emphasized in an interview in the German daily *Frankfurter Rundschau*, are his own inventions. Out of this material Heym has built a vision of better Germany. In true allohistorical fashion, Heym lets small causes change the course of history: advancing U.S. Army troops receive the order to stop at the border of Schwarzenberg in order to stay out of the area to be administered by the Russians. The problem, however, is that the order fails to mention whether it refers to the eastern or the western border of Schwarzenberg.

When Louis Lambert, an American lieutenant, flips a coin and decides to halt the advancing troops at the western border, he accidentally creates an unoccupied zone, since the Red Army stops at the eastern border of Schwarzenberg. The county itself is soon taken over by a workers' council, and some of these workers gradually start to dream about an independent Republic of Schwarzenberg. From the very beginning these workers face enormous obstacles. Wedged between two armies, they not only have to deal with rebuilding some kind of administration and repatriating Russian POWs, but they also have to fight off a group of marauding German soldiers.

Max Wolfman, a Jewish intellectual who escaped from a Nazi prison during the bombing of Dresden, plays a key role in the creation of this mini-utopia. He regards Schwarzenberg as a test case for the utopian concepts that he developed in his dissertation. This dissertation—which was rejected by his Ph.D. committee as “un-Germanic”—attempted to analyze social structures in utopian societies and derive from them guidelines for a future rebuilding of German society. When the workers' executive council appoints Wolfman head of the justice department—a genuinely utopian position, as the very existence of the Republic of Schwarzenberg is precarious—he drafts a constitution. This document aims to reconcile socialism and individual freedom by giving the control of all factories to workers' committees and by abolishing the police and armed forces. Wolfman hopes that this small-scale utopia could prove a positive example for all of postwar Germany.

Soon, however, the political realities move against the little republic. Except for Lieutenant Lambert, who half-playfully created the power vacuum in Schwarzenberg, the Americans are not interested in this unique social experiment. As the U.S. troops

retreat into their zone of occupation, the Red Army occupies Schwarzenberg. It is not merely the outside intervention, though, but also the lack of confidence on the part of the people themselves, that leads to the destruction of the Republic of Schwarzenberg. The bourgeoisie hopes for an American occupation, while the Communists prefer the certainty of Stalinist rule to any utopian experiment which might lead to incalculable results.

As soon as the Red Army occupies Schwarzenberg, Wolfram is arrested for anti-Soviet activities and condemned to prison. He is eventually released and becomes a professor at the University of Leipzig, where he gives lectures on utopian literature. The epilogue, set in the 1980s, presents Schwarzenberg as a possible alternative to the bureaucratic and oppressive East German "Socialism" and, implicitly, the social conditions in West Germany. The Republic of Schwarzenberg represents not only an unrealized chance in the past, but also a future opportunity for a re-united Germany. As Heym rather optimistically told an interviewer: "If there is ever going to be a re-united Germany, then the

constitution and the social structure it is based on will be quite similar to those in Schwarzenberg. I believe that you could copy my Constitution of Schwarzenberg word for word."

Like most utopias (and allohistories), *Schwarzenberg* turns out to be a work about the here and now rather than a nowhere land. Heym's novel refuses to accept the Cold War as a historical necessity and imagines a better future. What distinguishes *Schwarzenberg* from the majority of literary utopias, though, is that it avoids the smug certainty about the "iron laws of history." Instead, it presents an ambiguous vision of the past and the future, both elegiac and hopeful. Schwarzenberg, after all, lies neither in some distant place nor in the future, but in the fascinating realm of unrealized possibilities. ▲

1) See Gordon B. Chamberlain, "Allohistory in Science Fiction," and Baron G. Hacker and Gordon B. Chamberlain, "Past that might Have Been, II: A Revised Bibliography of Alternative History," both in *Alternative History: Eleven Stories of the World As It Might Have Been*, eds. Charles G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg (New York: Garland, 1986).

Susan Palwick

## I Was a Teenaged Crud Fan: Confessions of an Uptown Girl

### Part 3 of 3: All Dressed Up...

What did we all become, after our adventures as crud feni? Greg is now a cellist with a symphony orchestra, according to Nadia; after reading a previous draft of this essay, she also told me that he hadn't suffered as much at the convention as I'd feared. "Some woman thought he was cute and started petting his tribble suit," she said. "He was having a good time." I was glad to hear it; Greg and I had avoided each other completely after the convention, and I kept hoping that he'd either forgotten his ordeal or been able to forgive us for it.

My friendship with the others lasted, however. Paula moved to Virginia the following summer. Everyone at her new school looked like her, and she wrote me ecstatic letters about how happy she was. Last winter she married a Navy officer stationed in Osawa, Japan. She'll be moving there to join him once she's completed her employment contract (as a civilian working for the Navy) in Washington, D.C.

Beth, who hadn't attended the convention but greatly enjoyed our stories about it, went on to a Christian college, where she majored in history. I visited her there a few times and was impressed with the genuine kindness, tolerance and good cheer (so similar to the qualities displayed by the science fiction community) of her classmates. The last time I heard from her, several years ago, she was teaching history in a private Christian high school on Long Island.

Nadia's completing her doctoral dissertation in physical anthropology at NYU, where she also received a master's degree in biomechanics. She's spent the last two summers doing research at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base; she attends NASA conferences and just won the Aerospace Medical Association's award for best student paper. She writes amateur *Star Trek* novels in her spare time and still wears Trek buttons on her denim jacket.

It's clear to me that none of this is coincidence. As adults, we often return to, or recreate, the places where we felt safe when we were growing up. In choosing safety, however, we frequently choose exclusion as well. Paula will share many physical characteristics and cultural values with the people at that American Navy base in Osawa, but she's still going to be a *gawjin* in the outside society. Beth's strict religious beliefs ensure that she'll only feel completely at ease in the company of those who share them. And Nadia and I, although we've turned our respective childhood passions for science and writing into professional success, are still both decidedly eccentric by the standards of most of our doctor, lawyer, and banker classmates.

There are ways in which our friendship hasn't changed at all. When (after we'd been out of touch for half a year) I told her I

was moving to New York, she asked me how I was transporting my belongings. I don't drive, but I explained that I was renting a station wagon and getting another friend to drive it for me. "Oh, no you aren't," she said—the tone entirely familiar from seventh grade—and spent half a day helping me move with her own car.

In other respects, though, we've grown apart from each other as much as we've separated from the mainstream. In my junior year of high school I convinced her to attend Lumscon. I'd gotten tired of *Star Trek*, and I wanted to go to a general science fiction convention. I loved it. There were panels about books and writing, and the dealer's room sold items other than IDIC pendants and "Beam Me Up, Scotty" bumper stickers, and some of the people in costume belonged to a strange organization called the Society for Creative Anachronism which I thought sounded really neat—and which, with its quasi-medieval focus, certainly offered a welcome change from all those Spock ears.

But Nadia was bored and unhappy. There wasn't enough *Star Trek* at this convention. She didn't care about that other stuff. Our interests had diverged, and the friendship—although enduring and undoubtedly lifelong—had never been quite the same since.

After that first Lumscon, I didn't attend another SF convention until the 1980 Wodicon in Boston, during the summer between my sophomore and junior years of college. I had a wonderful time. I was glowingly proud that a story of mine had just been published in a fanzine, and even prouder that several people told me they'd liked it. I wore silly t-shirts and went to lots of panels, including one where an otherwise intelligent, reasonable man began frothing at the mouth while talking about why he disliked fat fen in costumes. I thought he was a loony, and wondered what had happened to make him so intolerant.

I attended my second Lumscon, the following April, with a group of fellow students from the Princeton Science Fiction Society. We didn't have the money for a hotel room, so we took over an unused function room and unrolled sleeping bags under chairs and tables, trying to arrange ourselves so we wouldn't be visible to the security guards. (I remember a phone in that room ringing twenty or thirty times while we lay in the dark, afraid to answer it. Shortly thereafter two hotel security guards came in. One shone his flashlight randomly around the room and announced loudly to his companion, "Well, Bill, I guess there's nobody here. But if there were somebody here, it would be a good idea for them to pull those tablecloths down over the edge of the tables so you couldn't see who was underneath." He and his friend left, we rearranged the tablecloths and slept soundly

until morning.)

We weren't the only people without hotel rooms. The couches in the lobby were being used as crash space by two married SCA folk, in full Viking regalia, who'd brought along their one-or-two-year-old son. I watched the mother give him his bottle at five or six in the morning; she was calm and attentive and loving, and the little boy seemed perfectly happy, but I wondered if he'd grow up thinking that everyone wore Viking costumes and slept on couches in hotel lobbies. It was the first time I'd considered the psychological ramifications of what had always, before, seemed innocent and harmless fun.

That same spring, Robert Thurston and John Silbersack came down from New York to be guest critics at a student SF writing workshop I'd started. Despite a successful professionals' program, we were very nervous about inviting pro critics. We needn't have worried; Thurston and Silbersack were as kind as they were thorough. They told me the story I'd submitted was of professional quality, and they recommended that I attend Clarion.

I was both elated and terrified. My friends all thought I was a good writer, but I'd never dreamed I might receive similar encouragement from people actually working in the field. The idea of going to Clarion made me dizzy. I'd never be able to afford it and I'd never be able to produce a story a week, or whatever you were supposed to do. I'd be the worst one there. Everyone would laugh at me. No, it was just too scary.

Ironically, Silbersack had asked me to submit some work to *The Little Magazine*, of which he was then an editor. After three or four months I finally got the courage to send something off, and never heard back. At the time I assumed that the manuscript wasn't any good; now I know that, although it probably wasn't, I'd have gotten a response had I enclosed a SASE. (No one had told me the rules of manuscript submission, and I didn't know enough to ask.)

My friends tried to talk me into sending out other stories, but I refused. No, I told them, the stories aren't good enough. I don't want to send anything out until it's perfect. You guys are only saying this because you're my friends, anyway.

They kept nagging me, and I kept refusing. I got rather testy about it. Now I realize that what they were saying boiled down to, "Because we love you, we want your work to reach a wider audience," but I was still too afraid of rejection to be able to listen.

I stayed that way until the autumn of 1983, when (still with the Princeton group, although I'd graduated in 1982) I went to Philcon. By this time we'd started renting hotel rooms, cramming twenty people into a single, and scornfully referred to the unwashed costumed as "scuzfem," even though our standard convention regals of jeans and t-shirts was a much a costume as the SCA couple's Viking garb. We didn't get stared at on the street, nosirree. We were perfectly normal and respectable, although smarter than vast segments of the population.

If we didn't get stared at, though, neither did we get any respect. The concom had set up large round tables outside some of the function rooms, and one evening we sat talking to Gay and Joe Haldeman, who had frequently spoken at Princeton. A well-known editor strolled over, new author in tow, to say hello to Joe and Gay. Gay introduced us; the editor and author ignored us. They took the two remaining seats at the table and began discussing business between themselves, still ignoring us. We made pointed conversational overtures which included warmly congratulating the new author on having sold his first novel; he smiled stiffly, muttered thanks, and resumed ignoring us.

I was horrified. If they wanted to talk by themselves, why bother sitting at our table? We were part of the audience for that first novel and any subsequent ones, and for whatever else the editor's house published. How could they be so rude to us? It wasn't even good business sense, let alone good manners!

But even in my righteous (and, I think, not unfounded) indignation at their blatant gracelessness, I recognized the mechanism behind their behavior. To those two professionals, we were no different than the costumed scuzfem we ourselves

scorned. We were the great unwashed. There were hundreds of great unwashed at that con, and had the editor and neopro chosen to recognize us, how could they not have recognized the others? In the absence of professional credentials, what criteria were they to use? Better simply to ignore all non-professionals, especially young ones in herds. (This is the same tactic most New Yorkers take with the homeless. I've done it myself, knowing it's unfair but lacking the energy to differentiate between twenty different pleas for spare change.)

My friends and I knew I had talent, but unless I sold something I'd have no way to convince most professionals—the people I now considered neat and interesting—to pay any attention to me. In social terms, I was *already* being rejected by editors, and I wasn't going to get past that unless I started sending things out.

#### Costume Compromises

So I did. I sold my first story slightly less than a year later, and went to Philcon '84 wondering if anyone would be impressed. Although I hadn't acquired the ability to walk on water, I did receive smiles and sincere congratulations from several pros. One of them was Ellen Kushner, who remembered me when she came to a Princeton workshop the next spring. Because she liked the story she saw, knew I'd made a sale to *Asimov's*, and knew I was applying to Clarion, she introduced me to David Hartwell.

I attended Philcon '85 as a Clarion West graduate and editor of *The Little Magazine* who'd made three or four fiction sales. I sat in the bar with the professionals; I got invited to the SFPA suite and even enjoyed myself, since one of the things I'd done at Clarion was to work hard on breaking my party phobia. And I had a painfully difficult time dividing my attention between my old friends, the Princeton buddies who'd loved and supported and believed in me before I'd sold a word, and my (new) fellow professionals—most of whom, I believed then, would have cut me dead if I hadn't made those sales.

To a large degree the professionals won: not because they were nicer, and not even because they were always more interesting, but because they represented what I was trying to become. I already knew how to be a student, but I still needed to learn the social and professional rules for being a writer.

I know a few more of those rules now than I did in 1985. Most of them never get published in the *SFPA Bulletin*. For one thing, I now take it on faith that the professionals who most vehemently despise fans used to be fans themselves. (In some circles, in fact, professionalism seems to be measured chiefly by the scorn one heaps upon people who wear funny clothing.) Me, I'm trying to stop despising fans; I'm trying not to be ashamed of the fact that I was an audio engineer for a pair of dancing tribbles when I was fourteen. Because I have infinitely more compassion—and even admiration—for my gangly, awkward, enduring teenage self than I did at the time, I no longer want to disown her. My boots, leather jacket and silver earrings are a costume too—and a considerably less ingenious one than Nadia's fake fur tribble suits, and I'm not about to forget it.

Why, then, do I wince whenever I see the Trek buttons on Nadia's denim jacket? She says it's because I've allowed peer pressure to push me away from something I once valued; I think it's because she's still sending out some of the same visual cues she did when we were fourteen. Behind her pity and my embarrassment lies the truth that we've chosen very different identities and express them in very different ways. What's important is that both of us realize where the different aspects of our costumes are appropriate. Nadia doesn't wear her Spock buttons to NASA conferences, and I don't wear my shiny lizard earrings to the office.

In other words, the goal is flexibility, not limitation. And self-imposed limitations of all sorts—creative, physical, and social—are still all too common throughout the SF community. Some of us know we have wider options and choose not to use them; some of us don't yet know what our options are. But role-playing, as a way

of testing our real-world choices, isn't a bad thing. Costuming can be a constructive skill as long as we know where the costume ends and we begin, and as long as some of our costumes are designed to win us greater social mobility.

And why do I sometimes feel like an anti-intellectual? Probably because I'm not entirely comfortable with my uptown role yet, even though I've been developing it, in one way or another, for fifteen years. It's all just a costume, and one which doesn't always fit properly. I'm still not as adept at conversation as I'd like to be, and I'm certainly a whole lot better at awkward sincerity than I am at sophistication. To the extent that I'm not there yet, I suffer from Impostor's Syndrome.

And to the extent that I've come a long, long way, I suffer from culture shock. I couldn't disown that clueless seventh grader even if I wanted to, and I know it. There are still moments when I feel the twelve-year-old looking out through twenty-eight-year-old eyes, through all those layers of artifice

and education and professional accomplishment. She doesn't know deconstruction from Daffy Duck. Put her in a dark upscale bar with people discussing obscure literary theories and she'll either go to sleep, hide under the table, or tell herself stories until the talk turns to something more interesting.

She's the reason I started writing in the first place, and she'll always be at the core of my audience. My high school teachers weren't, after all, asking me to exclude anyone from that audience; they just wanted me to expand it. But until I've worn this costume long enough to believe that I can remain ignorant of deconstruction and still be considered smart and literary, I'll retain the annoying tendency to make self-deprecating comments. And when I make them I'll feel—temporarily, I hope—younger than my actual age. In the meantime, the process continues; why, five years from now, I could be wearing anything. . .

There, Patrick. Did that answer the question? □

### Kathryn Cramer Sincerity and Doom:

## An Eventual Review of James Morrow's *This Is the Way the World Ends*

(New York: Henry Holt, 1986; out of print, but Ace pb forthcoming in May 1989)

Part 2 of (on second thought) 4

### Morlock Macho

Consider the US science fiction publishing industry, a particularly germane example of the ways in which mass production manifests itself in strange ways in places one might not expect it to have influence.

*This Is the Way the World Ends* was published in hardcover by Henry Holt and is being published in paperback by Ace. It is quite a good book and its central concern is an issue about which millions of Americans can become very agitated and upset, about which nearly everyone has an opinion. And yet it is the sort of book which is generally regarded as uncommercial.

What virtually everyone who reads for pleasure (with the exception of the few cynical individuals who actively look for trash) wants from a book is that it be a good book. Quality is not, I hasten to add, one thing. But regardless of what particular qualities a reader looks for, most all of them do want quality. This attitude, however, is not considered an effective marketing target—too vague to market for.

Ever wonder how one becomes a science fiction editor? The usual process is that one gets a job as assistant to a science fiction editor. These jobs are coveted by many who love science fiction and want to work in the field that they love. During one's initial employment, one learns thousands of small details about how a book is acquired and published.

But this phase is also an indoctrination process. Our idealistic young science fiction reader (who has been lucky enough to get this job) is shown of illusions like (a) that one gets to work on only good books and (b) that editors get to spend lots of time at work reading good books.

One gets promoted to editor by learning how not to get one's head shot off in editorial meetings; by learning how not to say something to make one seem wide-eyed and naïve; by learning to use buzz words and phrases to describe books to the higher-ups in the company that they can recognize as commercial; by learning to seem a nice young person who will follow orders and will not lose the company money by acquiring books merely because they are good.

When younger editors (and not just the younger ones!) get together, they tend to have sincere but self-congratulatory conversations about what is commercial. These conversations are very important on an inexpressible emotional level to the people involved. The (often banal or mistaken) opinions exchanged in

these conversations are deeply held.

Young editors aren't the only ones who manifest this. I have certainly been guilty of this. I did it when I first got into publishing; I've done it as an editorial assistant, and I've done it during the time I've worked for literary agencies. Copyeditors find discussions of the fine points of copyediting tremendously meaningful. At one time I found discussions of reading slush piles tremendously meaningful. In fact, I remember that it was difficult to get myself to shut up about freelance reading. I needed to recite what I knew because it was very important to me to reassure myself that the judgements I made were correct.

This is not new. In his autobiographical volume *The Motion of Light in Water*, Samuel R. Delany recounts what his then-wife, Marilyn Hacker, said upon returning home from her first day of work at Ace as Don Wollheim's assistant:

"There's this gay who works there," Marilyn told me after her first day, "—he's twenty-five—who used to be a reader at Scribner's. He told me this afternoon that he rejected Nabokov's *Lolita* when he was there. He said he still didn't think it was a good book." She shook her head. "He's still bragging about it. And he's Jewish."

We both laughed.

Well, one strike against them. (p.76)

Morlock Macho is the term Patrick Nielsen Hayden invented to describe these verbal displays, after the Morlocks in H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*. Morlock Macho is the sin of pride at one's knowledge (rudimentary or otherwise) of the publishing industry.

This is certainly a sign of job insecurity (and indeed, anyone who believes that his or her job is secure in publishing is more than likely mistaken). During this delicate time during which tasks (the ones best done at night, after hours, by anonymous gnomes) have the emotional importance of one's first sexual experience, the locations of the rewards and punishments have a lot to do with how the ghost of mass production sneaks into places it doesn't belong.

Something analogous probably goes on during the sorting process that leads to the advancement and promotion process of sales people, book buyers, etc. I once spent an evening listening to a rising young B. Dalton buyer explain (with disarming sincerity), in a classic display of Morlock Macho, how he knew which books would sell and which wouldn't and that he wasn't fool enough to

risk company money on a book merely out of love (i.e. merely because he thought it was a good book!). Buyers at the chains are generally not encouraged to read books before they buy them. The science fiction buyer at Waldenbooks, David Thorsen, maintains that he has read little if ever.

What this process—the hiring, advancement, and promotion among the employees of publishing companies—has produced is an industry full of people who desperately want to believe in the deepest reaches of their souls that by memorizing the blueprint for *The Book That Sells* one can learn to recognize the kind of book that members of the general public will enjoy reading, will buy, will recommend to their friends. They want this because of their very normal desire to have the feeling that they are doing a good job. Those who run publishing companies quite earnestly want their companies to be run as businesses, with all that the word implies. And, in fact, the standards for judging what is and is not a proper business are derived from the worlds of post-industrial-revolution manufacturing and of finance—fields in which the commodities involved are as interchangeable as possible.

#### *The "Criteria" Novel*

This is not to say that publishing companies should not try to make money. On the contrary. Rather, if the publishing industry had blossomed before, say, the textile mills, contemporary accounting systems might be very different. An accounting system is merely a mathematical model and at a crucial point in history one model was chosen over an infinite variety of other models. Because of the inappropriateness of the business systems of mass production when applied to publishing, the selection and editing of the books themselves often need to be distorted to fit the accounting system.

Is it necessarily the case that books (and music, and painting, etc.) must be shoehorned into systems of cost accounting and into economic theories invented for use with grain, tea, and textiles? I'm sure that there are people who would say that I am naive to think that it is not. Can it be that we of the science fiction field have so little imagination as to believe that there cannot ever exist an accounting system (i.e. a mathematical model) which does not require that the books be skewed to suit? I hope not.

The most extravagant and outrageous attempt to make science fiction books into interchangeable product was the *Laser Books* series put out by Harlequin and edited by Roger Elwood. The selling point of the whole line of books was that the books would be as alike as possible. A Vice President of Harlequin (one Mr. O'Keefe) actually said in public with almost painful sincerity, on a panel at a Westercon in the 1970's, that wholesalers "treat books like cabbages" and that "they don't care what's in a book;" that although the books were intended to be very much alike (so much alike that the names of the authors did not appear on the publisher's order forms) that "to talk about them as formula novels is not quite right. They are criteria novels." He justified the effect of the *Laser* series on the science fiction field by saying they Harlequin would "use [the series] to expand science fiction into areas where it is not usually read." In response to a question from Charlie Brown regarding the fact that, until that time, science fiction publishers had made a good portion of their profits on backlist, he responded "our [Harlequin's] success has always been right up front or not at all."

Commercial failure killed the series although it was very widely distributed. Apparently the success did not come as upfront as desired. But had the books sold to readers just as well as the average comparable non-*Laser* science fiction novel (or met whatever obtuse hopes that Harlequin might have had for them) the series would probably still be alive today, and might, in fact, be dominant in the sf marketplace, as *Silhouette* and *Harlequin* romances are in theirs. This was, as Mr. O'Keefe put it, Harlequin's "pious hope."

The most glaring and financially successful example of the "criteria novel" in science fiction—the systematic distortion of the books to suit the needs of a mass-production-style accounting system—was the Del Rey book under the leadership of Judy-Lynn del Rey. (While DAW Books asserted that they were doing the same kind of books, much to Don Wollheim's credit the books themselves indicate that they were doing something much broader and more eccentric.) Judy-Lynn del Rey (aided by her expert husband, Lester) was the first editor in science fiction to make the great transition from regarding the audience for the book as *readers* to regarding them as *consumers*.

She became able consistently to bend the books enough to convince the sales force that sold Del Rey books that the books all adhered to the blueprint of the Commercial Science Fiction Novel or the Commercial Fantasy Novel and were proper criteria novels. Because of the financial success of the Del Rey line—which may originally have had more to do with Judy-Lynn del Rey as a charismatic leader of sales forces than with the books themselves—editors at other companies are strongly encouraged to take the same attitude toward their books and establish criteria that might encourage salable product.

Once the market is trained to believe in her strategy, it no longer matters whether it is the *book* that sell, or the *belief* of the industry that the books will sell, that sells books. The net profits are at their own proof. No one has to think about which books to stock or read. In fact, they are encouraged not to.

Judy-Lynn del Rey was training publishers, her sales force, book stores, and ultimately consumers—and she was, by 1980, treating them as consumers rather than readers—to determine the value of a book using a set of simple mating signals by which the raw genetic materials of words and trees could be as rapidly as possible transformed into dollars. And one gathers that she truly believed that this was a good thing.

They could have been selling shoes or toothpicks (or Mr. O'Keefe's cabbages) for all it mattered. The Del Rey book became a dependable product that looked the same, read the same, and sold the same (until the next month's releases). All the profit comes up front. Terry Brooks = Jack Chalker = Piers Anthony = Anne McCaffrey = Stephen R. Donaldson = this month's lead. And this was accepted as good. (This new process used, metaphorically speaking, artificial insemination, much chemical fertilizer, growth hormones, forced feedings and hydroponics; circumventing as much as possible the normal though complicated and time-consuming process by which fictional ideas are translated from writer to reader, a process really rather similar to the process that Weyerhaeuser uses to grow the trees to make the paper on which all these interchangeable books were to be printed.)

This is not to say that Terry Brooks or Jack Chalker or Piers Anthony or Anne McCaffrey or Stephen R. Donaldson or this month's lead are not writing books with unique literary virtues, books wholly dissimilar in their real meaning from one author to another. (I'm sure each one of them would take exception to having his or her name inserted into the above equation. And rightly so.) Rather, the goodness of the book is made irrelevant to the process. Only its adherence to the criteria is important. If unique quality were a prerequisite, the product would be unreliable. If unique quality were important, the editor, the publicity department, the sales force, the buyers, and the bookstores would have to think of a new way to sell the books every month! If unique quality were important, why, they would have to think hard!

And the manner of hiring, at all levels of the process, would have to be less random. Many people who truly love books and who are able to move books though the existing system would be unable to do the job in a system that required more and deeper thought. It is not that anyone would have to be paid more. Most people who work in any level of publishing have the skills necessary to make a whole lot more money in another field.

Rather, hiring would be more difficult. Thus, one of the real points of monetary savings in mass production is irrelevant to the workings of the publishing industry: Everybody works cheap here, regardless of innate talent, intelligence, skill level or whatever. Publishing revolves around the love of books, not (to put it crassly) wage slavery.

Publishing at all levels rewards Morlock Macho: the acquisition and production of "established winners" or convincing simulacra thereof, such that thought is conserved whether it is the financially correct decision or not. And, on the highest levels, it is most often not. Every mass market company publishes more than one "bestseller" every month and more than 50% of them do not bestsell. Every commercial hardcover company publishes several "bestsellers" per list and a high percentage of them do not bestsell. Yet this model is applied as slavishly as possible to every level and category of publishing now, and let the devil take the backlash. Never mind that cabbages rot and good books don't.

#### *Analogy Doom*

And then there are those who have figured out the set of simple mating signals which editors try to use to entice the market place, and who have therefore made the transition from treating editors as readers to treating them as consumers. Again, the sincere and piteous ghost of Roger Elwood appears to moan and clank its chains. He was the most extreme example, and again, his methods were too extreme. And so he failed.

Over the course of a two-year period he was able, by giving all the right pheromonal signals to editors, to consummate contracts for more than *two hundred* original anthologies. He actually turned most of them in, although many were never published because he had already flooded the market. And, although he earned a couple of hundred thousand dollars doing this, he killed the anthology market—although he believed, or at least said he believed, that he had not, even after the murder was accomplished. Before this, the average original anthology sold substantially better than the average first novel and was considered a viable commercial property. Today one of the phrases that might be found in *The Phrase Book for Young Editors* is "Anthologies don't sell." Elwood did it by treating editors as consumers whether he realized what he was doing or not.

Despite the wreckage of the anthology market and Laser Books, some people seem to think that Elwood had a few good ideas, ideas that just might work if carried out in moderation. And surprisingly, most of editors will still let themselves be treated as consumers.

There seems to be a whole consumerist food chain at work here, each tier of which is trying to give the tier below the signals without the content. The agents, anthologists, and packagers prey on the editors; the editors prey on the Editor-in-Chief or the president of the company, who in turn prey on the sales force; the sales force prey on the book store owners and the accounts; and the stores prey on the customers who wonder why they can't seem to find any good books lately. And the victimization, as I've just described it, is entirely an artifact of the conservation of thought.

Among the several people who are good at catering to this editorial weakness are Martin Harry Greenberg and Byron Preiss. One can make the argument that they are not to blame for their ability to get book contracts and to make the books look attractive to the consumer (i.e. the editor). Many try. Some succeed. And they happen to be among the "some." And one can make the argument, as Mr. O'Keefe did, that they are expanding the science fiction market by selling books to people who don't read sf. They are merely filling an ecological niche, and are (by the way) increasing sf's market share. More than a decade of experience has shown us that as the market has expanded the quality of the audience has been compromised. And furthermore, so long as the

**Morlock Memos:**  
(Found on the floor at Tor Books, early autumn, 1988.)

DATE: 17 May 1988  
TO: Debbie Notkin  
FROM: Charity Cleebers  
RE: harebrained critical theory

*Plato:* I posit that *Neuromancer* should be read as a single concretized metaphor, that metaphor being derived from modern critical theory.

*Socrates:* Yol?

*Plato:* It is the deployment of the fractured subject across a polysemic, polyvocal, densely referential landscape.

*(Socrates invites Plato with a rubber chicken; excuses himself.)*

market is expanding, they don't drive out the good books. But as soon as the market begins to contract, the good-but-not-criteria-oriented books are the first to go by grace of editorial triage.

Editors want to get their more tiresome obligations to their employers over with so that they can be allowed to publish books they really love. Greenberg, Preiss, et al. give the illusion of providing books that will serve this purpose as quickly and painlessly as possible. Without editing.

What, in fact, is the case is this: that the transaction reduced the apparent skill level of the editors (sound familiar?) and therefore reduces their authority to select good books. Packagers give editors what they want, or what they think they want. Packagers give editors a set of signals that they can take to higher ups and to sales conference to show that the editor in question is doing books that are really commercial. (And this translates all the way through the system ... everyone at every level of the process can take these signals—these memes—and pass them on. Press the bar and get an M&M.) The books give the desired signals and promise more. But more they don't deliver. The signals are the message. These are the bower birds and peacocks of sf publishing. The tail isn't actually good for anything, but it sure is nice to show your boss and to show off at conventions. It's as good as having Stock cars, in the right circles.

Packagers and editors can sit on panels singing "And We, We are the Gurus of Marketing!" and congratulating themselves for realizing that what the audience is really interested in is marketing, not content. It is good (and necessary for the health of their souls) for editors to believe that everything they publish is good but it is bad for anyone else to believe it without case-by-case proof. However, isn't it one of the great clichés of American culture that the second most boring topic of discussion, after insurance, is marketing? (The British don't let publishers get away with this at their conventions, judging from the recent WorldCon. We should give our editors more grief.)

By singling out Martin Harry Greenberg and Byron Preiss, I do not wish to harm their reputations, or make it more difficult for them to get book contracts. Rather I single them out because they,

among the various people who take advantage of editors' consumerist tendencies, do projects with the most potential for improvement. The packaging ideas that some people are able to sell are bad ideas to begin with. This is not the case with, for example, *The Universe*, edited by Byron Preiss, published in grand style by Bantam Spectra. While it may be exactly what Bantam wanted, it is not nearly the book it could have been. And while it contains some good stories and some good essays, that is not enough to make an anthology good.

The loving attention of a careful and thoughtful editor trying to make it the best book possible could have made it ten times the book that it is. But once that particular packaging idea has been done, it is used up. It cannot be done over again, but better this time, or at least not until people have had time to forget that it's been done already.

(While it is not true of art, per se, that an idea can be used up, it is true of art yoked to commerce. Since the coincidence of two movies or two books with roughly the same plot which come out within several months or years of each other is so seldom a coincidence, the assumption on the part of most observers is that whenever this happens, the second is done in imitation of the first. Furthermore, in the case of anthologies, if an anthologist puts together a sloppily-done book using fifty percent or more of the best and most appropriate stories, the appearance of imitation is even more distinct.)

Martin Harry Greenberg takes on contracts for more anthologies than he can conceivably do well, learning entirely too well the lessons of mass production. I suspect that he would argue that he insures quality books by choosing quality collaborators. But I gather from talking to his some of his collaborators that they are given rather limited authority to select contents. That's neither here nor there. The books speak for themselves. A good reprint anthology should lend additional meaning to its contents, and his often don't. Some are indeed good books, but most seem slight, regardless of bulk.

Judging from the great distance of someone who has actually spoken with him only once or twice (and on the one occasion I do remember having a conversation with him, he was most kind to me), it appears that his sincere intent is to do adequate books. If the book turns out to be a really good one, that's fine too. His quality control is set too low, as is often the case when the conveyor belt in the factory is set on too high a speed. Giving him the benefit of a doubt, I am asking that he demand more of himself. And I am asking it publicly rather than privately, because I'm sure someone must have said this to him before.

I'm also sure that there are some who disagree with me about

the quality and utility of these crowds of anthologies. A. J. Budrys will defend, quite publicly and vehemently, Greenberg's anthologies. As a frequent co-editor, I'm sure that Isaac Asimov would have some words of praise for Greenberg's works.

(I gather that the distinction that tends to be made is between anthologists as artists and the anthologist of record, Greenberg being of the latter variety. But I must confess that I don't see the difference. The anthologist who is attempting to create art through anthologizing must commit revisions of history and thereby become an anthologist of record. And any anthology, whether original or reprint, must be grounded in history.)

I also found it quite ironic that the recommended reading list of Robert Silverberg's really first-rate anthology *Robert Silverberg's Worlds of Wonder* is populated almost entirely with Greenberg & company anthologies. (For all of you who haven't yet read the Silverberg anthology, I suggest that you go out and buy a copy, preferably in hardcover, since this is the kind of anthology you may want to have around to refer to for many years.) It is clear that Silverberg knows what a good anthology is. I suppose he must have included all those less than good anthologies in the recommended reading list because they happened to be in print at the time he was putting together the list and they include first-rate (if often reprinted) material.

The damage done is that Greenberg fills up so many slots in so many publishing houses that his books become like the rabbits on the Kerguelen Islands: they so thoroughly populate publishers' lists that they force out other species out of the ecology.

His permeation of the market is so thorough that some of the younger editors have difficulty understanding proposals not presented in the same style as his. I've had questions like "What do you mean, this isn't the final table of contents? I don't understand," when submitting proposals for anthologies which would involve a year or more of serious research. Or I pitch two proposals over lunch, and the editor wants to see the other eighteen. (This last is a bit of an exaggeration, but you get the idea.)

And, like Byron Preiss, when he has a good idea for a book and makes a mediocre book out of it, that idea is used up, no matter how good a book someone else might be able to make of it. Once it's been done, it's been done.

Providing the publisher with a good marketing hook and an okay book to go with it is simply not enough. The lack of aesthetic ulterior motives is actually damaging to the marketplace for good books.

(Next issue: *Forbidden Knowledge, Universal Book Doom, and Pushbutton Politics*—in part 3 of 4.)

### Strokes by John Clute

Seattle: Serconia Press, 1988; \$8.95 trade pb; 178 pp.  
Reviewed by Patrick Nielsen Hayden

The review columns collected in *Strokes* combine to make a thing unusual in SF: the tale of a constant reader, sympathetic to the field but not of it, through two decades of reading and thinking. John Clute has written fiction himself but is in no wise a Knight or Blish, a craftsman shedding light from the sparks of his grinding axe. Knight and Blish rightly thought it high time that SF criticism aspire to the level established by middlebrow reviewers like Granville Hicks in the *Saturday Review*. Clute is a critic of the next order: more a V. S. Pritchett, a self-made sophisticate casually assuming his own readers' sophistication, dancing with any partner with sober elegance. The essays in *Strokes*, topical and occasional though they are, assume that we know our SF, assume that we care about the literary values for which Knight and Blish had to fight, assume that we know how to dance.

If my manner seems a bit rich, trope-laden and fraught with extended metaphor, chalk it up to reading and re-reading the essays in *Strokes* in too-quick succession. Clute, as he himself

halfway acknowledges before taking Samuel R. Delany to task for similar vices, is prone to a dense allusiveness, seemingly willful in its opacity. Unlike the clerics of the academic SF industry, though, Clute writes that way, one senses, out of joy in verbal complexity for its own sake. Few lapses of thought or idea lurk behind his surfaces. Readers patient enough to approach *Strokes* as an entertainment in its own right will find that, once the verbal moiré patterns have been resolved by the eye, what remains is solid sense about SF, informed but not diminished by Clute's reek of High Lit. As Clute himself will tell you, here writes no alien visitor, no tenured magister of the literate guild (vast, remote, and unsympathetic), but rather a stone addict as bad as the rest of us, just cultivated enough to cast a colder eye. SF criticism, insofar as it has ever existed, has never had a surplus of colder eyes.

The individual essays in *Strokes* come from a variety of sources; their predominant form is the omnibus review, wherein the writer—faced with the task of reviewing an unrelated passel of

current books for the upcoming *New Worlds or F or SF*—struggles mightily to find some common gibbet from which to hang them and just as often gives in to the obvious solution, which is to use an abrupt and unapologetic transition between one book and the next. Thus some of these essays are actual prose constructs which make a larger overall point, and some of them are merely heaps of littler pieces. All are readable; many are at times quite funny. Here is Clute reviewing Ellison's *Partners in Wonder*:

Any author who claims...that failing in an attempt to compose a collaborative novel with Avram Davidson can claim to rank as an experience with "death camps, hard-hats, campus massacres and the human gamut that runs from Spiro to Manson," demonstrates, through the use of apocalyptic hyperbole as doodle, a sense of stylistic weighting that does rather burn the bush to the ground; the reader, kicking around in the ashes, isn't likely to find much more there than charred twigs, parboiled shuckama (a back-formation from "shucks Mother I dint meant to burn the garage down and crash the car and torture Pussy but aint I cute?") and carbonized fragments of Word. Nor is the author's claim at this point about Davidson and himself, that collaborations are risky enterprises, and that one can do just as well going it alone, much clarified when, on the following page, he advances the claim that successful collaboration is "akin to the benefits of sex with a partner," and that going it alone is like masturbation, and that nobody has ever "gotten a baby by playing with himself." Brought together flapping their wings like drunken parrots, these two claims have an aching, vertiginous effect on the reader, rather like the effect of Ellison's best prose in general.

### *Haunting Women*, edited by Alan Ryan

New York: Avon, October 1988; \$3.95 pb; 210 pp.

### *Women of Darkness*, edited by Kathryn Ptacek

New York: Tor, December 1988; \$17.95 hc, 306 pp

Reviewed by Greg Cox

Let's start with the obvious similarities. . . .

Both *Women of Darkness* and *Haunting Women* are anthologies of horror stories written by women. Not surprisingly, the majority of these stories feature female protagonists; they also tend to focus on relationships and/or domestic stresses: heartless lovers, abusive fathers, jealous sisters, and threatened or threatening children. Both books contain strong stories by Tanith Lee.

There, however, these volumes' resemblance to each other ceases. And while the intent of the editors may have been to contrast female-authored horror fiction with its more visible male counterpart, it is the differences between the books themselves that prove most striking, as well as discouraging.

At first glance it appears to be a generational issue; *Haunting Women* is a reprint anthology whose selections span the last century, including works by such authors as Shirley Jackson and Iak Dinesen, whereas *Women of Darkness* is a self-proclaimed "showcase" for newer authors like Kit Reed and Lisa Tuttle. Reading both books back-to-back, though, is enough to make one fear for the future.

To be more specific...

Although often decades apart in origin, the stories in *Haunting Women* share a common high level of craftsmanship and style. I have my favorites, most notably "Loopy" by Ruth Rendell, about a meek civil servant who succumbs to lycanthropic delusions while impersonating the Big Bad Wolf, but there's only one real clunker in the book: "The Ghost" by Mrs. Henry Wood, a creaky

Among the most valuable are the pieces on Gene Wolfe collected into a section at the end of the book, culminating in a formidably well-argued theory about the parentage of Severian in *The Book of the New Sun*—a theory almost certainly knocked askew by the publication of *The Urth of the New Sun*. Which hardly matters, as the almost fanatical intensity with which Clute attacks the problem itself demonstrates one of his points about Wolfe's writing: that Wolfe deliberately sets out to plunge his readers into a "fever of interpretation." Elsewhere Clute writes well and at length on the underappreciated Robert Aickman, whom he (correctly) calls "the finest English writer of supernatural fiction of the last fifty years"; and conjures up a very different sort of fever in the formidably baroque essay "Scholia, Seasoned with Crabs, Blish Is", a piece almost perfectly representative of Clute's literate wit ("Stately, anfractuous James Blish comes down from Fabers, bearing a bowl of scholium...") and of the way his insight so often emerges from, rather than disappearing into, his forays into near-impenetrability.

...Our nostalgia (our need) for the steamy, high-pitched, kinetic fullness of iconicity persists, for genres work (human perception works) not only through metonymy, the substitution of part for whole, of set for omniscient dreams, but also through the persistence of the image, time's body English.

Throughout the volume Clute intersperses occasional comments from the perspective of 1988. These updates are appended to but do not replace the original texts, and are clearly marked as new material: a valuable and/or honest and/or self-confident way to handle one's inevitable afterthoughts. Overall it is a well-assembled and well-published collection, and deserves a place in even the barest library of commentary on the field. ▶

piece of Victoriana whose melodramatic prose ("Ah, Charley, if you could but foresee what is before you! If Mrs. Channing, from her far-off sojourn, could but know what grievous ill is about to overtake her boy!") fails to enliven a slight and not very frightening tale of a college prank that goes fatally awry. The stories in this book are uniformly rich, cohesive, and satisfying; they feel *finished* in a way in which many of the entries in *Women of Darkness* do not.

But more about that later.

These stories are also quieter. From a historical point of view, it's interesting to note that the *Haunting Women* wrote almost exclusively about hauntings and/or psychological terrors. As Ryan points out in his introduction, there are no monsters in their stories, and very little gore.

*Women of Darkness*, on the other hand, only proves that its contributors have seen the same movies and comic books as their splatterpunk brothers. Ptacek's book is full of monsters: rotting corpses, woman-eating demons, crazed psychotics. While this may be a symptom of living in the age of Bundy and Bianchi—one notes ominously that the serial killer, who appears not at all in *Haunting Women*, is a recurring presence in *Women of Darkness*—it is the reader who ends up victimized. Monsters and splatter effects probably work better in the movies (and, perhaps, even in novels, where they can be doled out in careful proportions); too many of these new stories, even the better ones, sacrifice emotional richness and resolutions in favor of a splashy red shock at the end. *Women of Darkness* deserves credit for its

cross-cultural diversity, with voodoo, Japanese folklore, American Indians, and even modern medicine providing springboards for individual stories, but what does it matter if someone always ends up getting munched in the end? At the risk of sounding like a boring old fart, it is the quieter stories, like Melanie Tem's elegiac "Aspen Graffiti" or Carol Orlock's enigmatic "Nobody Lives There Now, Nothing Happens," that stand out. As for the others, they may well contain some original and startling ideas, like the scuba-diving necrophile of "In the Shadows of My Fear" by Joan Vander Putten, but they're also overwritten, unsatisfying, and generally, well, *half-baked*. Of the splatter-killer stories, only "Cannibal Cats Come Out Tonight," Nancy Holder's deadpan portrait of a teenage mass murderer who wants to eat Tina Turner, really makes a virtue of its nastiness, achieving some sort of grisly escape velocity into a higher realm of delicious sick comedy.

But these, and a few others, are the exceptions. There's little in *Women of Darkness* to match the chills and craft of these treasures in *Haunting Women*: "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Foghorn" by Gertrude Atherton (no relation to the Ray Bradbury story of the same name), "Fell on Both Sides of the Gate" by Rosemary Timperley, and Mary Danby's "Robby," a vivid account of life with a retarded child that ends with a jolt more stomach-turningly awful than all the mad slashers in *Women of Darkness*.

As stated before, it first appears as if the heirs of Shirley

Jackson and Mary Shelley mark a serious decline in women's dark fantasy—but only if one accepts the stories in *Women of Darkness* as truly state-of-the-art. Fortunately, if not for the readers of Ptacek's anthology, this is not the case. Aside from Tanith Lee, one looks in vain for any of the female heavyweights of modern horror. Where are Anne Rice, Daphne Du Maurier, Angela Carter, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Joanna Russ, Suzy McKee Charnas, Anne Rice Siddors, Basi Wood, Elizabeth Walter, or Joyce Carol Oates? For that matter, what about such rising stars as Lee Kilough, Susan Casper, Sharon Farber, Tahitha King, and Leigh Kennedy? With all due respect to talented beginners like Patricia Russo and Wrennica Eide Cox, *Women of Darkness* reads less like "a showcase for the women horror and dark fantasy writers of today" and more like horror's answer to a Writers of the Future anthology. (A colleague went so far as to describe it as a supernatural Special Olympics.)

Granted, most of the contemporary authors named above do not appear in *Haunting Women* either (Ryan seems to have bagged most of his prizes in the more exclusive hunting grounds of mainstream literature), but then that book, besides delivering more real shivers per page, was presented as an historical sampler rather than a landmark collection of the very best modern works, whereas the scarier thing about *Women of Darkness* is that someone might actually think that this is the best today's women have to offer.

### Soldiers of Paradise by Paul Park

New York: Arbor House, 1987; \$17.95 hc; 280 pp.

Reviewed by William M. Schuyler, Jr.

Imagine a world at the edge of a galaxy, a world where the year is 80,000 days long. How will people survive through the 20,000 days of spring when the food is running out and no crops can yet be grown? This, in broad outline, is what Paul Park portrays for us, avoiding direct exposition so that we become aware of the solution before we understand the problem. His answer to the question is both plausible and revolting: if survival of the race depends on people producing surpluses that must be stored for generations before it is time to draw on them, they will have a brutal theocratic society with a religion which preaches reincarnation and a caste structure more rigid than that of Hinduism. A fanatical devotion to orthodoxy with resulting religious wars that makes medieval Christianity seem mild and tolerant will be natural developments.

Park has traveled extensively in India and Southeast Asia, and it shows. It is not just the tenets of caste and reincarnation that make the religion of Angkhidit reminiscent of Hinduism. The Starbridges, who are both the highest caste and a single vast extended family, are largely blind to the suffering of their inferiors, just as was so often the case with the Hindu brahmins. Prince Abu and Dr. Thanakar Starbridge, two of the major characters whose movements Park follows, are atypical.

Even they cannot escape their upbringing. Thanakar is compassionate. He is outraged by the dreadful treatment which the religious hierarchy inflicts on heretics in its prisons. By virtue of his status he is able to force the guards to let him bring medical treatment to the prisoners. He does not realize until he is told that the guards are caught in a double-bind. They cannot refuse him because he is a Starbridge, but they will be punished for permitting him to enter because he is not authorized to do so and they are therefore disobeying orders. The punishment is death by torture.

Thanakar is indifferent. It is not that he thinks the guards deserve their fate because of their treatment of the prisoners; in this system of belief, everyone gets what he deserves and the proof that he deserves it is that he gets it. Thanakar's indifference rises from a failure to grasp the point that his actions, which he knows are more symbolic than real in helping the prisoners, have any effect on the fate of the guards. After all, they too get what they deserve, by definition, and hence regardless of what he does. This is not a point of view which a Western reader can easily adopt, but

Park portrays it so well that it seems natural, almost unavoidable.

An even greater tour de force is his depiction of the antinomials, originally holders of an especially radical heresy. From the position that the priests have enslaved the people and enriched themselves by their sly distortions of the words of Angkhidit (true enough), the antinomials moved to their remedy: the way to true freedom is rejection of all wealth and knowledge. In particular, since words have been the instrument by which they are enslaved, they utterly reject language. They have been so rigorous that they no longer remember what religion is, much less why they adopted their way of life. And yet, shamefully, they cannot dispense with speech completely. The survival of the free depends on the ministrations of those who have betrayed the ideals because they lack the strength to follow them. Despising themselves for their weakness, the "biters," as they are called, try to expiate it by seeing to the needs of those who have reached a degree of freedom so exalted that they refuse to recognize the demands of the flesh. Although this is clearly related to, among other things, certain Buddhist and Jain social structures, to imagine such a community is no mean feat. Park does something truly remarkable by showing something of what it would be like from the inside.

But who are these people? The problem dawns on us gradually. The men and women in the book call their world Earth, although it is not our Earth. On the other hand, what else could they call it in their own language? The horses have heads, claws and vestigial wings. They are not our horses, but what are they to be called if not horses?

One way to handle the problem of alien nomenclature is simply to make up alien names. This is inelegant. Gene Wolfe used a different technique in the New Sun books; he adapted archaic terms. The results were impressive but had the (intended) effect of introducing a note of exoticism; Wolfe framed the story with notes by a "translator."

Park has tried to do something else. He has attempted the perilous task of representing the ordinariness which a culture which is not ours would appear to itself to have. Dennis R. Caro did this more explicitly and less successfully in *The Man in the Darkstar*, but Park wants to engage our interest and empathy before we ever realize that his men and women are not just foreign

but alien.

Therefore he names for function rather than form wherever possible. His men and women are not humans in an exotic environment. They are not even of simian ancestry. Even their names are not as ours. Although the antinomials do not use language, they communicate by music which creates pictures in the minds of those who use it. This is not metaphor: others do it, but only the antinomials limit themselves to this mode of communication. By the time we realize how truly alien they are, however, we are caught up in their lives and culture in a way that we could not otherwise have been.

The dust jacket blurb compares *Soldiers of Paradise* to Wolfe's New Sun books. It may ways it is closer to Brian Aldiss's Hellconia trilogy. In Wolfe, a vast and splendid world is revealed, but in the final analysis it is the characters and what happens to them which is important. In Aldiss, there is the same scope, but it is Hellconia and what it does to its inhabitants, not the inhabitants themselves and their deeds, which are the focus of attention. Park's characters are beautifully drawn and the events in which they figure are memorable, but the same is true of *Soldiers of Paradise*. The world is as it is. Although changes take place, what people do, no matter how noble or despicable, has little effect on what happens on a large scale.

There is an aura of inevitability about the events that Park describes. One gets the feeling that this is very much the way things must go every spring. The details may differ, but every spring there will be starvation and priestly oppression and heresy and bigotry and war. Every spring there will be unrelenting misery and injustice at the hands of the Starbridges who are, with few exceptions, convinced of their own rectitude, and even the Starbridge will have their peculiar torments.

Aldiss took great care to get the basic physics of his world right in the Hellconia trilogy. I have doubts about the soundness of Park's physics. An 80,000-day year is nearly as long as Pluto's, so Park's Earth must be very far from its sun. The appearance of Paradise in the skies is apparently not correlated with one particular season, and the seasons are roughly equal in length, which means that the orbit is of low eccentricity and that Paradise is not another star or a protostar. Assuming that this is a world roughly like ours, which seems to be the idea, an 80,000-day year would mean that Earth would have to have a giant for a

### Read This

Recently read and recommended by Esther M. Friesner:

*Sister Light, Sister Dark* by Jane Yolen (Tor hc). A high fantasy that actually makes a society of female warriors believable (mainly because not everyone in it is cut out to be a swordswoman). Myth, legend, and the prophecy of a messianic figure's coming to change this world are further enriched by the interpolation of modern "scholarly notes" on the events of the past. Of course I got the biggest kick out of how wildly off the mark the academic "experts" were. I want more!

*Walkabout Woman* by Michaela Roessner (Bantam pb). This fantasy novel is based on Australian aboriginal beliefs, but it does not rely on the novelty of non-Western myth alone to succeed. The story itself is moving, exciting, and universally human in its expression.

*Dating* by Nancy Lynn DeMond (Citadel Press pb). Yes, out-of-genre, but this book is a hilarious dictionary of terms sure to make male-female relationships even more confusing than they are now. Consider it a guide to understanding aliens, a must for first-contact preparation.

sun or it would be an ice ball. Even then, it's hard to see where it would get enough heat without more vulcanism than it seems to have, and the amount of sunlight shouldn't be enough to drive the biosphere. And this is leaving aside the potential problems of excessive heat gain and loss in the long summers and winters and of ultraviolet radiation. The mysterious sugar rain is also a puzzle. This is Volume I of the Starbridge chronicles. Maybe all this will be explained in later volumes, but it won't be easy.

It's hard to say how many more volumes there might be in this series, but the fundamental premises of the series would easily justify enough to cover a year. I, for one, will look forward to the changing of the seasons. ▶

### Catspaw by Joan D. Vinge

New York: Warner, September 1988; \$17.95 hc; 392 pp.

Reviewed by Loren J. MacGregor

If you have read any science fiction criticism over the years, you have probably encountered reference to James Blish, the consummate professional who wrote *Star Trek* adaptations and original material with equal facility. Often (though not always) these references are accompanied by a bemused comment to the effect that it is difficult to believe that the man who wrote *Black Easter* also wrote the first several book adaptations of the original *Star Trek*, as if somehow the accomplishment were the equivalent of painting the Sistine Chapel and following it up with a series of those eight-page pornographic Little Dirty Comics which were prevalent in the 1920's and 30's. That's all very well, lit-crit fans seem to say, but when are you going to stop all this nonsense and write another *real book*?

Which brings me to Joan Vinge: a Hugo-award winner for her novel *The Snow Queen*, Vinge has perhaps been better known recently for *Star Wars* tie-ins or for novelizations of forgettable films such as *Santa Claus—The Movie*. Yet all of these projects were professionally done, some were great fun (as they were intended to be), and through it all she has continued to write, yes, "real books," the latest of which is *Catspaw*.

*Catspaw* is a fast-paced, straightforward adventure story; in some respects it is Joan Vinge's own entry into the cyberpunk sweepstakes. What we have here is a conservative cyberpunk novel, the only one so far. The time is the 25th century, in a

world of drugs, big money, high tech and situational ethics. The protagonist is Cat, an alien halfbreed in a culture which has practiced virtual genocide on his mother's people, the telepathic Hydran culture. Because of his heritage, and a parallel widespread distrust of ESP powers, Cat has been outcast most of his life. Moreover, he was once forced to use his telepathic power to kill someone, and the psychic backlash crippled him. Drugs will temporarily restore his telepathic abilities; the same drugs will also burn out his abilities permanently if used indiscriminately. But he is broke, the last of his money having gone towards his university education and the difficult, expensive facade he has had to maintain to continue his schooling.

It is at this point that Cat is kidnapped and blackmailed by Braedee, the Chief of Security of an interstellar combine, to work as a bodyguard for the dowdy, matronly Lady Elnear, a prominent politician and relative-by-marriage of the powerful TaMing family, one of several ruling-class families in 25th-century society. Braedee will provide a weak form of topiasis, the drug which will restore Cat's telepathic ability, and Cat will respond by feeding Braedee information about the TaMings and anyone else he meets. Someone, it appears, is trying to assassinate Lady Elnear, on the eve of her campaign for a seat of the Security Council, and Braedee wants to know who it is, and

why. It might be any one of several people or factions, but the most likely is her political opponent, the self-appointed religious leader Sojourner Stryger, who may sincerely be what he appears, or may be in the pay of one of the major families. More to the point for Cat is the fact that Stryger hates Hydrans with an intensity amounting to mania, and uses his reputation as an humanitarian as a shield for a pending holy war designed to eradicate all nonhumans.

*Catwoman* is labyrinthine in its intertwined plot threads and reverse plot threads and double-dealings and betrayals. To borrow a felicitous paraphrase from the Flying Karamazovs, what we have here is an intense study in Byzantine simplicity. Yet Vinge moves the book along briskly, setting up the next complications even as she begins to untangle the last.

The book is not without flaws. There is, for example, an attitude toward why anyone might want to legalize drugs which would not be out of place in the Reagan administration. Further, there is a trap set late in the book; the situation is necessary to the plot, but, bluntly, it doesn't work. Cat, at this point in the novel, has grown to be a powerful telepath, yet he

is caught by someone who is deliberately *not thinking* of the trap which [she] has set. I am readily capable of believing in someone who, when told not to think of a green elephant complies and through sheer willpower thinks of something else instead; unfortunately the character here is not so self-disciplined. But for the most part Vinge is deft in portraying a wide spectrum of characters; her handling of people of wealth is as sure as her depiction of Argentines and cybernetic/symbiotic performance artists, and of the residents of Deep End (as in "off the . . .") to whom Cat eventually goes for help. I especially enjoyed that most rare of phenomena, a sympathetic gay character who is neither a swishing, limp-wristed faggot, nor a cardboard Marlboro Man, nor some other form of grotesque. Mical is, simply, a decent man whose eventual intervention on Cat's behalf is believable and—more importantly—grows directly out of his established character, in a way that is inventive and absolutely appropriate.

This isn't a groundbreaking novel; it isn't intended to be. It is solid science fiction, well-researched and well told, and for me it was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon read. □

## Michael Swanwick Eight Short Fiction Reviews

Maybe it's extravagant to devote a full column of short fiction reviews to a single writer. But there's something interesting happening here. Two years ago Neal Barrett, Jr. was pretty much written off in critical circles as a mid-pack writer, a reliable producer of competent novels of no special importance. Then, after a ten-year hiatus from short fiction—time honorably spent, I should hasten to add, at work in the greater lengths—he returned to the form to make a sudden grab for popular attention and the artistic high ground with a run of stories that range from the odd to the deranged. Today we focus on those stories, no one of them omitted, in order to teach ourselves a salutary lesson: that we ignore writers at our own peril.

Herewith, then, eight glimpses into the dark, occasionally comic universe of Neal Barrett, Jr.:

"Trading Post" (*Asimov's*, October 1986) is set in the devastation of post-invasion Earth. The hero is one of the ragged few who have survived the onslaught of the alien Snakes. Will is a practical man. He batters Mimos, Wyeth, and Cézanne to a small-time alien criminal in exchange for small amounts of sugar, tea, marijuana and gasoline. It is not, as the story demonstrates, an easy way to make a living. Barrett employs the narrative technique of dumping the reader in the middle of a complicated situation without clarifying exposition, a strategy worked here to mostly good effect, though slightly downplaying the story's central irony. "Trading Post" ends in an ambiguous personal triumph, achieved at the cost of ignoring the grim implications of what has come before. It is solid entertainment enlivened by a few startlingly vivid images, a strong story that only in retrospect—after one encounters more of Barrett's own work—takes on heightened significance.

"Sally C." (*Best of the West*, Doubleday, 1986) belongs to that strange, unnamed subgenre that some time ago mutated and split off from the parallel timetrack What If? subgenre exemplified by such works as *Bring the Jubilee* and *SS/GB*. Let's call it cultural collage. It may be technically possible for the Wright Brothers, the young Rommel and an aging Pat Garrett to have met, but we no more believe it than we would if Yuri Gagarin were thrown into the mix. That's not the point. In fiction of this type the heroes and villains of history are displaced and juxtaposed in order to heighten their characteristics by contrast, to play on their archetypal meanings and occasionally—as here—to reward a favored figure with one last ride. Slickly done and richly satisfying.

"Perpetuity Blues" (*Asimov's*, July 1987) is the saga of young Maggie, whose father went to the 7-11 for catfood and fell into intergalactic toto, and whose mother died of exposure to series

television. We are in very strange territory here, something like a Hunter S. Thompson version of *Oliver Twist*. Was Maggie's father really a KGB mole working under deep cover at Montgomery Ward? Is Oral Blue really a trailer camp alien, or is he just spinning his wheels? And why do the children in New York City tie celery to carts? The pace is frenetic, the prose sly as a lean Texan, and it would be madness to attempt any summary of the plot.

The story is told in a kind of deadpan vernacular, a sure-footed paranoid twang that comes from the heart of redneck, but is never exaggerated or false. It's a dark universe Maggie inhabits, but pluck and innocence win through, as they always must. This is Barrett's best story yet, and by far his funniest. I feel I understand America a whole lot better now that I've read it.

"Highbrow" (*Asimov's*, July 1987) is set in a far future with clankey steamdriven flyers and horse-drawn carriages in which huge numbers of people spend their lives working on—I hope I'm not giving anything away here; a sharp reader could pick up on this by the second page—an enormous statue of Richard Nixon. It is an enterprise which will consume their lives as it has the lives of their forebears for more generations back than most can trace. We never do learn their rationale for this; it is so self-evident that they never give it a second thought, though Will, the protagonist, is consumed by his desire to be assigned responsibility over the Hallidays when his overseer retires. We are given half a day of Will's life, insight into his relationships with crew and father, and a fine description of a storm coming in off the sea to lash the stone behemoth. Will meets the woman clearly destined to be the love of his life. It is all played in high seriousness, and yet nothing can disguise the fact that they are all—and though here it is exactly the point of the narrative, the same might be said for all of Barrett's people, in whatever story—caught in an absurdity and unaware of the fact. Sly stuff.

"Class of '61" (*Asimov's*, October 1987) is set on a depopulated Earth, its demoralized remnants once again under the neglectful thumb of the conqueror—unseen Burrowers this time, creatures of godlike whim that experience time oddly and have all but exterminated humanity because they dislike strong emotions. Daniel—again, the survivor, the pragmatist trying to hold things together—welcomes home two old classmates called in by the aliens to hold a seance and rid them of a ghost haunting their tunnels. This is a profoundly disturbing story, in which the powerful and submerged aliens are a clear metaphor for the destructive forces in the human soul (it should be noted that Barrett has a special gift for making plot elements stand in for moral and psychological issues), and ends with Daniel's acceptance

of the failure of his life and despair of improvement. It is also the least successful story of the batch. It sprawls a little, and its people never do connect with each other. Though to be fair, that's exactly the point Barrett is making.

"Diner" (*Omni*, November 1987) once again has a decimated world under alien conquerors. This time, biological warfare has brought on a near-total environmental collapse and the Chinese have filled the power vacuum from motives more altruistic than imperialistic. Mack, the mayor of a fishing community outside of Galveston, is trying to hold it all together. It's not easy. His girlfriend plans to walk inland in search of a better life, a journey that both Mack and the reader know can only end in death. Worse—because it threatens the community and the lies it lives by—Henry Ortega, who runs a mock diner where the citizenry can eat the Chinese-processed fishcake and pretend they are having old-fashioned, varied food, plans to hold a Fourth of July picnic. Despite Mack's best efforts the center cannot hold. In the end pragmatism is not enough and, good intentions on all sides notwithstanding, there are no alternatives. This is a complex and tightly plotted prose machine, and the most successful of his straightforward—*to avoid a misleading use of the word "serious"*—narrations. Taken together with "Trading Post" and "Class of '61," it forms an essay of leadership, duty, futility and self-delusion.

"Girly Sweethearts Flying Circus" (*Asimov's*, February 1988) is a parody of the *Road Warrior* style of science fiction pushed to such extremes that it comes out the other side as something else. The eponymous heroine, in the company of a Wimp IX Series droid and the bloodthirsty marsupial Possum Dark, drives a one-man carnival through the colorful devastation of post-War deserts battering sex, tacos and dangerous drugs for gasoline and reams of heavy bond paper. Judging by the quality of the sex and drugs dished out, I would not advise anyone to try the tacos. For all the bleak cynicism of the background (there are hints that civilization has collapsed not so much from the War as from an excess of meat) it's all great fun. The laconic tough-guy dialog and flat-faced narration are pulled off with flair, the magical remnants of high-tech civilization mesh nicely with the spaghetti western ambience, and the comic wit, climaxing in a confrontation with a

troupe of renegade insurance agents, never flags. Flat-out gonzo and funny as hell.

"Stairs" (*Asimov's*, September 1988) is told in a kind of fairytale prose pushed hip-deep into madness. When Mary Louise decides to "book about the boy with amethyst eyes," a naughty flea in her ear and buzzed about. Words are all askew in this pocket universe; they come off the page reversed on your finger tip and melt in your mouth, filling your head with images. Mary Louise is trapped in a claustrophobic world filled with sexual menace. The halls are crammed with grey, gossolalic zombies, and food is bought with buttons and marbles. Taken literally, "Stairs" gives us a Ballard-esque horror: a building hundreds of thousands of floors high, crammed with the products of overpopulation, the exterior lost forever. But then the boy with the amethyst eyes appears and offers to take her to a place where people "don't wear pitch and soot and dead-grab yellow. Lead and drab and shadow-black and slug-dung madder. Colors dull as belly button fuzz in the dark of the night." But Mary Louise, grown used to her fearful internal universe, turns him away, and sinks deeper into insanity.

This is Barrett's most daring story yet, with prose that blurs calls attention to itself, and a deliberate confusion of interior and exterior realities. Too cryptic to be popular, it nevertheless warns us that here is a writer who is still growing, experimenting, stretching his boundaries.

Every so often we encounter the writer whose fate has been written but who refuses to accept the sentence, who, laboring under the storm of our benign neglect, makes a sudden break for the sky and catches the eye with the sudden, unexpected beauty of his trajectory. Not long ago it was Greg Bear, who went from obscurity to stardom so quickly it was easy to pretend he came out of nowhere, that we hadn't been ignoring him for years. Today it is Neal Barrett, Jr., science fiction's latest, least expected Hot New Writer. Here, for the moment, we leave him—feet up, wings extended, in full flight and headed toward destinations we cannot imagine.

Next time: Sex, Drugs, Lunar Rebellion and Corporate Jargon. ▶

## Bones of the Moon by Jonathan Carroll

New York: Arbor House/William Morrow, 1987; \$15.95 hc; 217 pp.

Reviewed by Kathryn Cramer

Although the ethereal Tom Crary painting on the dust jacket of *Bones of the Moon* suggests that the novel is a fantasy, the quotes on the inside front flap are from the likes of Ramsey Campbell and Stephen King; and it has a horror novel's first line: "The Axe Boy lived downstairs." *Bones of the Moon* is both fantasy and horror.

It is a utopian/dystopian novel; a book about the conflict between surface reality and the ultimately true; about knowing that one has terrible problems, and being unable to get outside help because, to the outside world, one seems to be living a utopian life. To the outside world, the central character's problems (where they exist) can be solved by applying the usual middle-class solutions of money and distance. And yet *really* they can't.

Cullen is a young woman living and working in New York. Out of loneliness she becomes sexually involved with a good-looking but shallow photographer who gets her pregnant and, upon being told of her pregnancy, says that it isn't really love between them and that she should get an abortion, which she does. She goes to a woman analyst, who "told me I was beautiful and witty and absolutely right to abort because my body was my own. But her feminist pep-talks only made me sadder and less sure of myself than before. I didn't want to be independent; I wanted to love someone and feel comfortable with my life." So she writes a ten-page single-spaced letter to her friend Danny who has become a basketball player for a team in Italy. He sends her a telegram: "WHY DID YOU WAIT TO TELL ME? THE FIRST THING I'M GOING TO DO IS PUNCH YOU IN THE

NOSE. ARRIVING TUESDAY FLIGHT 60/TWA/KENNEDY." He arrives in town, he's wonderful and makes everything all better. They move to Milan and get married and live happily ever after in Italy, and later in New York, except...that she begins to have serial dreams about a fantasy world called Rondua which she remembers from her childhood, and of a child named Pepai who is her son. The dreams are at first pleasant, but later turn frightening, and then enter the real world.

Her perfect husband seems unable to help or cope. And because he has promised to take care of her, she cannot present him with insoluble problems. So she can't let him help. Her real problems must remain a secret from him.

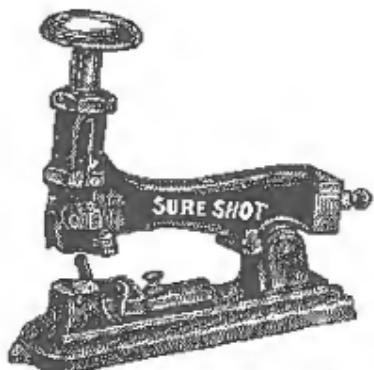
The primary objection to this book that I have heard voiced is that Cullen, the female first-person narrator, is not convincing, and that Jonathan Carroll does not successfully pull off the female voice. Whether or not one agrees, what this book does *not* provide is the cozy feeling of one woman speaking to another (*à la The Women's Room* by Marilyn French, which I read in high school, or more recently, *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood) so commonly found in books by women written in the post-feminist era.

Some members of panels at science fiction conventions will go so far as to say (not with particular reference to this book), in effect, that a man should not write a book in the first person that has a female central character because a man can't *know* what it is like to be a woman. And arguing from that stance, it is even

clearer that Jonathan Carroll cannot know what it is like to have had an abortion.

With this in mind, if I were offended by Carroll's portrayal of Cullen as a woman and set out to write a feminist critique of *Bones of the Moon*, based on experiences shared by men and women and experiences not shared, I would ask "Where does he think he gets the right to write a book in the first person about a woman who has an abortion and then feels so guilty about having killed her child that she dreams nightly of a fantasy world, the world of Rondua, in which her child is still alive?" There are very few responses an author can make to such criticisms; nearly all sound defensive and self-serving, and most—when used to defend one's work against this kind of attack—would likely lead to further charges of sexism.

Since Jonathan Carroll is a man, there is no defense that could be offered that would make that segment of the audience most swayed by such criticism able to read and enjoy this book. However, even though I count myself among those who could be very offended by a book with the same basic plot as I've just described, I was not offended by this book. In fact, I like it a great deal.



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Abortion is a major political issue in this country *not* solely because the impact would be so large were the issue decided once-and-for-all in one direction or another. It is also a major issue, (a) because people's experiences with abortions generally occur at times of great emotional stress, and (b) because it is such a powerful metaphor. The myth structure of abortion is the Tale of the Selfish Woman, who, having the choice between sacrificing herself for her family or sacrificing her family for herself, chooses the latter.

And Carroll makes subtle and complex use of this myth structure: much of the book seems to be about the slippery distinction between being *selfish* and *selfless*.

Is Cullen being selfish when she decides she no longer wishes to allow Alvin Williams, the Axe Boy, to write her letters? Or is she doing the sensible thing, protecting herself and her family from unwanted contact with an axe murderer? Is self-preservation a selfish or a selfless thing?

Is she being selfless to withhold information from her husband Danny about the extent to which she is involved with the world of Rondua? Is she really doing him some kind of favor, or doing both of them harm? Or was she, perhaps, selfishly holding onto her dreamland fantasy life at his expense and at the expense of their relationship?

Was it her selflessness or selfishness that brought about the death of her close friend and neighbor who died defending her from the Axe Boy? If her withholding information from her husband Danny was a selfish act, did not her friend Eliot become party to her selflessness? And, inasmuch as she let him become involved—fatally, in the end—was she not selfish?

Was her abortion a selfish or selfless act? Was she doing it because Peter, the shallow photographer, told her to? (Selfishly!) Was she doing it because she placed her own convenience over the life of the unborn child? (Selfishly! This one is the anti-abortion cliché.) Or did she do it because she had lost track of herself? (Selflessly, in a more literal sense.) Was it selfish or selfless for her to wait until after her abortion to write to Danny James? (The answer to that is probably 'both'.)

When she was a child, she failed at her original Ronduan quest because she used the fourth of the five Bones of the Moon to save herself. Was that a selfish act or a selfless act? What would have happened to Rondua if she had died?

Are not selfishness and selflessness often one and the same: the former following from the latter and vice-versa?

*Bones of the Moon* is a book about the difference between consensual reality and the reality of experience, about having forced away that which is valuable about oneself (selflessly? selfishly?), and now needing to get it back even though it may be irretrievably lost, about having fallen into despair even though from the outside one is leading a utopian life. It is a complex book about deep psychological issues, and to a large extent it is a refutation of the primacy of the literal level of meaning. Perhaps Carroll's willingness to write a book so obviously subject to the criticisms outlined at the start stems not from a kind of foolish bravery, but from the conviction that the psychological utility of the images he uses outweighs, and indeed complements, their political importance. *Bones of the Moon* is not a politically naive book, but a book that takes a particular political risk.

Jonathan Carroll has written about things men are not supposed to write about, he has strayed from the politically defined territory of men. And while he can never know what it is like to be a woman who has had an abortion, he can know something of the emotional structure of it, something of the cultural connections. And by writing this book, he has given words to pieces of the unspoken myth-structure of abortion. He hasn't gotten it all. But then, no one has.

What he shows us of Rondua was previously submerged in pain and politics. By using the example of a woman who has had an abortion, he brings to light the relations between selfishness and selflessness. And by writing a book about selfishness and selflessness in the context of abortion, he sheds light upon culturally subengaged aspects to that debate.

# Work In Progress

## A Bibliographic Checklist of First Editions

by L. W. Currey

Draft: Revised 10/88

\* indicates entry not seen.

ORSON SCOTT CARD  
b. 1951

CAPITOL THE WORTHING CHRONICLE. New York: Ace Books, [1979].

Wrappers. First Ace printing; January 1979 on copyright page. Ace Science Fiction 09136-9 (\$1.95).

CARDOGRAPHY. Eugene, Oregon: Hypatia Press, MCMXXXVII. 1152 copies printed. Three issues, priority of release as listed: (A) Buff cloth, cover gold stamped, 825 copies signed by Card and introduced David G. Hartwell. Note: Some copies have optional cloth slipcase. (B) Brown leather, cover gold stamped, 275 copies signed by Card and introduced Hartwell. Notes: (1) In imitation leather slipcase. Not issued in dust jacket. (2) Accompanied by paperbound issue of *Card Catalogue: The Science Fiction and Fantasy of Orson Scott Card*, compiled by Michael R. Collings. The "Leather Edition." Newcomer Notes: (1) In imitation leather slipcase. Not issued in dust jacket. (2) Accompanied by leatherbound issue of *Card Catalogue* ... signed by Card and Collings. The "Deluxe Edition." First Edition March 1987 on copyright page.

ENDER'S GAME. [New York]: Tor A Tom Doherty Associates Book, [1985].

Boards. First TOR printing: January 1985 on copyright page.

ENDER'S WAR. . . Garden City: Nelson Doubleday, Inc., [1986]. Boards. No statement of printing on copyright page. First printing has code Q24 on page 633. Reprint. Collects EENDER'S GAME and SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD. Note: Issued by the Science Fiction Book Club.

HART'S HOPE. New York: Berkley Books, [1983].

Wrappers. Berkley edition/February 1983 on copyright page. Berkley Fantasy 0-425-05819-0 (\$2.75).

HOT SLEEP: THE WORTHING CHRONICLE. New York: Beronet Publishing Company, [1979].

Wrappers. First Beronet edition April 1979 on copyright page. A Barones/Analog Book 0-89437-055-4 (\$5.95).

A PLANET CALLED TREASON. New York: St. Martin's Press, [1979].

Boards with cloth shelf back. First edition so stated on copyright page. Rewritten as TREASON.

\* PRENTICE ALVIN. New York: Tor, [February 1989].

RED PROPHET. [New York]: Tor, [1988].

Boards with cloth shelf back. First printing; January 1988/... 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 on copyright page.

\* SAINTS. [New York]: Tor, [June 1988].

Wrappers. Tor 0-812-58140-7 (\$4.95). Reissue of A WOMAN OF DESTINY.

SEVENTH SON. [New York]: Tor, [1987].

Boards. First printing: July 1987/... 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 on copyright page.

SONGMASTER. New York: The Dial Press, [1980]. First printing so stated on copyright page.

SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD. [New York]: Tor A Tom Doherty Associates Book, [1986].

Boards. First printing: March 1986/... 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 on copyright page.

TREASON. New York: St. Martin's Press, [1988].

Boards. First Edition/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 on copyright page. Expanded re-write of A PLANET CALLED TREASON.

UNACCOMPANIED SONATA & OTHER STORIES. New York: The Dial Press, [1981].

Boards with cloth shelf back. First printing so stated on copyright page.

THE WORTHING CHRONICLE. New York: Ace Science Fiction Books, [1983].

Wrappers. Ace Original/July 1983 on copyright page. Ace Science Fiction 0-441-91810-7 (\$2.75).

A WOMAN OF DESTINY. New York: Berkley Books, [1984].

Wrappers. Berkley edition/January 1984 on copyright page. A Berkley Book 0-425-05476-X (\$3.95). Reissued as SAINTS.

WYRMS. New York: Arbor House, [1987].

Boards. First printing has code 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 on copyright page.

Edited Fiction:

Dragons of Darkness. New York: Ace Books, [1981].

Wrappers. First Ace printing: October 1981/... 2 4 6 8 0 9 7 5 3 1 on copyright page. Ace SF 16862-9 (\$6.95).

Edited, with introduction and two short stories "Middle Women" (under pseudonym Brian Walley) and "A Plague of Butterflies," by Card.

Dragons of Light. New York: Ace Books, [1980].

Wrappers. First Ace printing: October 1980/... 2 4 6 8 0 9 7 5 3 1 on copyright page. Ace SF 16860-1 (\$7.95).

Edited, with introduction, by Card.

References:

Card Catalogue: The Science Fiction and Fantasy of Orson Scott Card, compiled by Dr. Michael R. Collings. Eugene, Oregon: Hypatia Press, MCMXXXVII.

Two issues, priority of release as listed: (A) Wrappers. Most copies distributed with the "Leather edition" of CARDOGRAPHY. (B) Ten leather, spine and front panels gold stamped. 100 copies signed by Card and Collings. 72 copies accompanied the "Deluxe Edition" and 14 were placed with contributor's copies of CARDOGRAPHY. The remainder were distributed individually (some or all marked "PC" and enclosed in imitation leather slipcase). First Edition March 1987 on copyright page.

Note: This is part of a series of bibliographic checklists of SF and fantasy writers that will update, revise, and expand the standard reference work *Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors* by L. W. Currey. For the organizational principles and methodology used in this and future lists, please refer to the introduction to that work. Knowledgeable persons are invited to communicate addenda and corrigenda directly to L. W. Currey, Elizabethtown, NY 12932.

a column

## Daniel M. Pinkwater...speaks

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.*

[SFX: KNOCK KNOCK]  
"Hey, Coleridge, you in there?"  
"Wha? Wha? Who izzt? Wha?"

Back when I was trying to be an artist, I used to patronize a dealer in art supplies. His name was Herman Hermann. He operated out of a loft in Manhattan. A lot of artists would deal with no one else, even though he was strangely helpful and destructive in equal measure.

This is a typical incident:

One time, a fellow came in—a painter—wanted to buy some pastel chalks.

"You're in luck," Herman Hermann said.

"This is not just some shop! This is Herman Hermann, Fine Art Supplies! These are not merely pastels. These chalks are made in a tiny village in Cornwall. One family makes them—has for generations. Practically their whole yearly output is bought up by Marc Chagall. I happen to have one box."

The painter buys the chalks. Then he wants paper.

"In a remote village in Pakistan is a tribe of Oriental Jews who have lived in one place for over three thousand years. They make a paper, once used for sacred documents by the priests of Isis and Osiris. Nobody knows the formula. This paper happens to be perfect for pastel drawing. I guarantee it will last for centuries, and the texture is incredible. Here, feel! Is that paper?"

So the painter lays out six bucks for a single sheet of paper—he's a little confused—he goes home.

Five o'clock the same day, he's back. Herman Hermann is just about to close the shop.

"That stuff you sold me this morning," the painter says.

"Yes?"

"It was everything you said it was! I went home and worked all day on a drawing. The quality of those chalks! The colors, and the feel of them! As if they had a life of their own! And the paper! I never experienced anything like it! And the drawing . . . well, I'm really

excited about it. I mean, I'm satisfied. I mean, it's the best thing I've ever done."

"What did I tell you?" Herman Hermann said. "Herman Hermann knows."

"Now what I want," the painter said, "is some of that spray fixative. I don't want anything to happen to my drawing."

"Spray fixative—ptui!" Herman Hermann said. "That stuff is diabolical. Instantly you spray it on, the chemicals start to consume the paper. In twenty years, it's gone. Of course, if you don't use anything, the drawing might get smudged. What are you to do?"

"What?" asked the painter.

"Herman Hermann has the answer," Herman Hermann said, "In Ohio lives an Amish farmer, a genius chemist. In the winter, when there's nothing to do he makes a fixative in his kitchen. All natural ingredients. You can drink this stuff. It won't hurt you, it won't hurt your drawing. He takes it to a paint factory, and they load it into aerosol cans—with compressed air, no fluorocarbons."

Now the painter is hurrying along the street, shaking up his can of Amish spray fixative. He gets back to his apartment, just as the last rays of the sun are falling on his masterpiece.

He doesn't even take his coat off.

He wants to protect his picture. He presses the button, and, of course, out comes a cloud of flat black. Rustoleum. Some mixup at the paint cannery in Amish country.

It's often like that. Look at that guy pounding on Coleridge's door in the middle of the poem. And just a couple of days ago, I finally wrote something great. I mean, really great. It all happened so fast. I hardly had time to realize what I had done when something made the computer decide it was no longer going to take orders from humans. The screen froze. I could see a corner of my creation—but the machine would not let go of it. It would not let it be recorded on paper or disk.

I tried to scrawl the piece by hand. Ordinarily, any time you rewrite something it gets a little better—but this had been perfect. There was only one way for it to go—a few little steps toward mediocrity.

I think the reason those painters were loyal to Herman Hermann was that it was easier to take when it seemed to come from him rather than admit the gods are jealous and destructive.



# Screech

(letters of comment)

Arthur C. Clarke, Colombo, Sri Lanka:

I had to give up reading science fiction some years ago—now I'm on the point of giving up reviews of science fiction. I look forward to the appearance of reviews of reviews of science fiction, so I'm not completely cut off from the genre. Despite this, I wish you luck, and enclose my \$36 for the first year's subscription.

I note your review of *Drowning Towers*: you may have already heard that it won the Arthur Clarke Award as the Best Science Fiction Novel of the Year. This may cause your reviewer to happily modify his last sentence. [In fact I knew that *Drowning Towers* had won at least one award, but I thought it had a chance of being the sort of book that "lives on...for years to come" nonetheless. —PNH]

Brian Stableford, Reading, UK:

... I found the leading article [in NYRSF #1] by Kathryn Cramer most interesting, and would like to offer a few comments on it, if I may.

"Hard sf" is a difficult term to define by reference to its usage because different users tend to load it with different connotations. There is, therefore, some sense in trying to determine what sort of definition the term ought ideally to have—but this will be pointless if the "clarified" definition actually ends up describing a set of literary entities radically different from any of the sets commonly implied by ordinary users of the term, and it seems to me that Ms. Cramer is moving in this unfortunate direction.

We cannot begin to make much sense of the term "hard sf" unless we have some parallel notion of "soft sf" to which it is dialectically related. The hardness of hard sf has little to do with the way that science is employed within a story and much to do with which scientific disciplines are brought into sharper focus. "Hard sf" is thus seen to be related to the "hard" sciences—which include not only the physical sciences *per se* but also the applications of physical science in various kinds of engineering—while "soft sf" is related to the "soft"—i.e., human—sciences. It seems to me to be very odd that Ms. Cramer takes for her paradigm of hard sf the Asimov story "Nightfall", which does not seem to this user of the term to qualify at all; my own choice of an "ideal type" for the hard sf story would be Larry Niven's "Neutron Star" or Robert Forward's *Dragon's Egg*.

Ms. Cramer points out, correctly, that what is ordinarily called hard sf is technophilic in attitude, but she goes on to argue this is quite distinct from "hard science content"—which is only true if one adopts, as she does, a very peculiar view of what constitutes "hard science content". Zoline's "Heat Death of the Universe" does indeed use scientific concepts as emotional metaphors, but that is precisely what hard sf does not do. "At its best," Ms. Cramer argues, "science fiction tends to be about the emotional experiences of what is true. In 'hard' SF this experience is represented metaphorically by scientific discoveries of great consequence." But most hard sf does not involve scientific discoveries—nor can it, because authentic discovery is unimaginable (to imagine the discovery would be to make it); what it does involve is problem-solving, which is a rather different thing (and one which, in literary terms, can be fudged). The ideal type of hard sf story is one which confronts characters with a desperate predicament, from which they extract themselves by technological invention and improvisation—small wonder, therefore, that such stories have a technophilic attitude. Emotion need not come into it at all.

The soft sciences are distinguished from the hard science

not so much by different philosophical foundation—the attempt to construct causal explanations and to embrace a deterministic world-view is just as obvious in human science as in physical science, as is the failure of that approach to cope with certain spectra of data—but by the fact that there is little in the way of an applied soft science to compare with the problem-solving resources of engineering. Attempts by sf writers to depict futuristic soft sciences which have become "hardened" (Asimov's psychohistory being the most celebrated example) are half-hearted and unconvincing. The hypothetical problems posed in soft sf are bound to seem unyielding by comparison with the problems posed in hard sf, and soft sf is therefore bound to seem pessimistic by comparison (and "technophobic"—not because it hates machinery but because it presumes that machinery cannot provide the appropriate answers to its questions). For these reasons, I would contend that the hard science attitude and the hard science feel are by no means distinct from the hard science content, as Ms. Cramer asserts.

It also seems to me that the *Oxford English Dictionary* has not been as much help to Ms. Cramer as she hoped that it would be. She selects out the third definition of "rationalism" given there, which describes the rationalistic approach of such philosophers as Descartes and Spinoza, who felt that a systematic account of reality could be deduced from a few indubitable axioms, rather than requiring to be constructed on the basis of a potentially infinite set of empirical observations. One can, as Ms. Cramer does, liken this metaphorically to the way of procedure by which a theoretical scientist may treat a discovered law as if it is true *a priori* and then tries to show what else must also be true—but it is advisable when doing so to remember that scientists do regard laws as corrigible in the light of further evidence; the true fundamentals of science are the data, not the laws. It seems to me, therefore, that Ms. Cramer is wrong to say that it is the earlier O.E.D. definitions of "realism" which are of primary relevance to science, but rather the one she downgrades—definition (3). The underlying presumptions of sf are by no means divergent from those of science as Ms. Cramer claims; both embrace a kind of realism which (alas) the O.E.D. does not trouble to identify—the Epicurean materialism which holds that all that exists is matter in motion—and both assume a rather more dilute rationalism than is there identified: the simple conviction that a proper logical analysis of empirical observations will lead to a viable theoretical understanding. The contortions and contradictions which Ms. Cramer believes to be part and parcel of hard sf's supposed attempt to bring about a "harmonious marriage of realism and rationalism" are mostly the result of her own linguistic gymnastics.

It may be worth noting in conclusion that some years ago I wrote an sf story about future technology which really does contain (albeit in a minor role) spherical cows of uniform density (it also features a gargantuan and radically reshaped hen called the Haevyside Layer and some very remarkable biotechnological furniture—its title is *The Furniture of Life's Ambition*). It has, alas, been rejected by every editor to whom I have so far submitted it. So much for theory.

Best wishes for the success of your venture.  
"Spherical Cow" is not the entirety of my notions about hard sf. Rather, I carved one small piece off of something that began as a draft for a proposal for an anthology (which, happily, has been placed with a publisher). I agree with you about the primacy of data over laws where science is concerned, but not where sf is concerned. In sf, the laws are primary, because the data is

inherently non-narrative. The genre in which data is primary is supernatural literature: the accumulation of atmospheric detail in supernatural literature causes the reader to formulate laws of, as it were, supernature. Science fiction, by comparison, relies much more heavily upon conclusions already arrived at in the scientific literature—the laws, rather than the data. With regard to science fiction, hard and soft, I respond (with a certain amount of sadness) that the distinction between "hard" and non-hard sf is no longer between sf that uses the hard sciences and sf that uses the soft sciences, but between sf that is centrally concerned with any science, and sf that is not. —KCJ

Taras Wolansky, Kerhonkson, NY:

I greatly enjoyed NYRSF #1; I didn't agree with anything in it, and that's just the kind of publication I like.

By this time I am sure others have already taken Kathryn "Spherical Cow" Cramer to task but hey, I have kinky tastes. Kathryn puts forward the proposition that the science in hard SF, its mathematical underpinnings left out, is "metaphoric...mythology...a form of folk wisdom...rationalization." This may be a gag article, intended to pull our chains rather than accurately reflect the author's views. Whatever the case, Features Editor Kathryn Cramer should have cut down Writer Kathryn Cramer's manuscript by about two-thirds.

If the manuscript is meant seriously, I will merely note that as far as I know *The Origin of Species* contains no mathematics whatsoever. How would Kathryn classify this book, as metaphor, mythology, folk wisdom, or rationalization?

How we react to a book certainly has a great deal to do with what we read or didn't read before. I was struck by this once again as I read Greg Cox's generally positive review of Tim Powers's *On Stranger Tides*. I was unable to get more than a few chapters into it. You see, during my misspent youth I read a lot of books like Fanny Burney's *Evelina* and *Camilla*, and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and Sir Charles Grandison. *On Stranger Tides* is set in the second decade of the 18th century yet how the characters talk, how they act, how they think, all rings completely false. Powers, who brought early 19th century London so magnificently to life in *The Anubis Gates*, here fails completely.

[Your opening line is bit like being told, "I love you because your breasts are too small, because your socks don't match, and because you have bad breath and terrible skin." But we do like to be appreciated. ¶ With regard to "Spherical Cow" and Darwin, as I said in the essay, "When scientific ideas and formulations are invoked in a text that does not make use of mathematics in appropriate amounts, the text relies upon the existence of other texts which do." And as Brian Stableford points out in his letter, the essence of science is in data, not laws. Scientific texts which are largely narrative exist in relation to presumed data which has been structured into a narrative through mathematics. ¶ I would have thought it needless to say, but "Features Editor Kathryn Cramer" doesn't have the final edit on features by Kathryn Cramer, nor do any of the editors in regard to their own writing. —KCJ]

[Why did you skip *Clarissa*? —TNH]

Letters of comment are welcome. All correspondence commenting on editorial content will be considered for publication unless the writer requests otherwise. Published letters are subject to abridgement.

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## NOR CUSTOM STALE

This issue comes to you despite Friday evening obstacles, setbacks urban, suburban, and rural—respectively, a mugging, a misplaced commuter train, and a station motor that broke in Jefferson Township, New Jersey. (To those who object to the "New York" name, our mugging victim responds that only in New York would we have this particular set of problems to overcome in order to put out the issue. We feel that we've earned the right to the name!)

In last issue's letter column, there was a letter from Michael Dirda, editor of the *Washington Post Book World*, defending a review in the *WPBW* which we criticized in this space two issues back. Dirda's fine-by-fine defense of the review—as though he were defending the one and only correct proof of a particular theorem—got me thinking about authority and book reviewing.

Then in last month's *Locus*, Dan Chow maintained that a particular title couldn't possibly be a classic, though the publisher referred to it as such: Chow had never heard of it, and it wasn't even listed in *Anatomy of Wonder*. What an impressive deferral to authority, we thought, leading to the joke line "Who do you think you are? You're not even in *Anatomy of Wonder*." That concept of authority seems regressive (not just academic—Medieval) and certainly against the traditions of the SF field.

Beyond the fallibility of reviewers, there is a more subtle problem: most publications allow a given book only one review, as though there were only one right way to look at each book. This is partially an artifact of attempts to 'cover' everything being published—there are more books out there than either the newspapers or *Locus*, or even *SF Chronicle* with its encyclopedic scan, can cover intelligently, so they try to review as many as possible without compromising whatever standards they have set for themselves. Of course, these standards vary greatly—from the often mature and in-depth pieces in, for instance, Dirda's *Washington Post Book World* to the pithy summaries with blurb endings that characterize the trade-journal approach. One treasures an insightful review whenever one finds it, but they are more rare than we think they should be. Wide reading experience is a sine qua non for good SF reviewing, but it is not enough to prevent the facile, shallow reviewing that is so common. Too few reviewers write well (or, we sometimes fear, think well). And so their reviews lack authority or even much interest.

In the NYRSP, because we don't try for all-inclusive, journalistic coverage, we hope to be able to avoid these traps. And this is perhaps the main difference between reviewing and criticism. We are attempting to review books about which there is more than one thing to say, books worthy of more than one point of view. We are seeking to put books into not only the context of the writers' larger body of work, but into the broader contexts of recent work in the field—and sometimes, when it seems meaningful, into the broadest context of contemporary literature. To the extent that we succeed, then the reviews will have an authority of their own. We are reaching toward more authentic standards of reviewing, toward more authentic opinions.

To this end we will try to maintain our multtheaded editorial board, and will occasionally review the same book more than once. Whenever appropriate, we will print correspondence responding to our stance and standards. This becomes more and more fun for us as the issues grow in number.

So far the magazine has been met with enthusiastic support from many querters. At this point we would like to thank our subscribers, those of you who have bought copies of the magazine, those companies that have taken out ads, and those who've sent us material. All of you make it possible for us to overcome the muggings, the missed trains, and the car breakdowns that life puts in the way of publishing an issue. Thanks.

—Kathryn Cramer & the Editors.

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